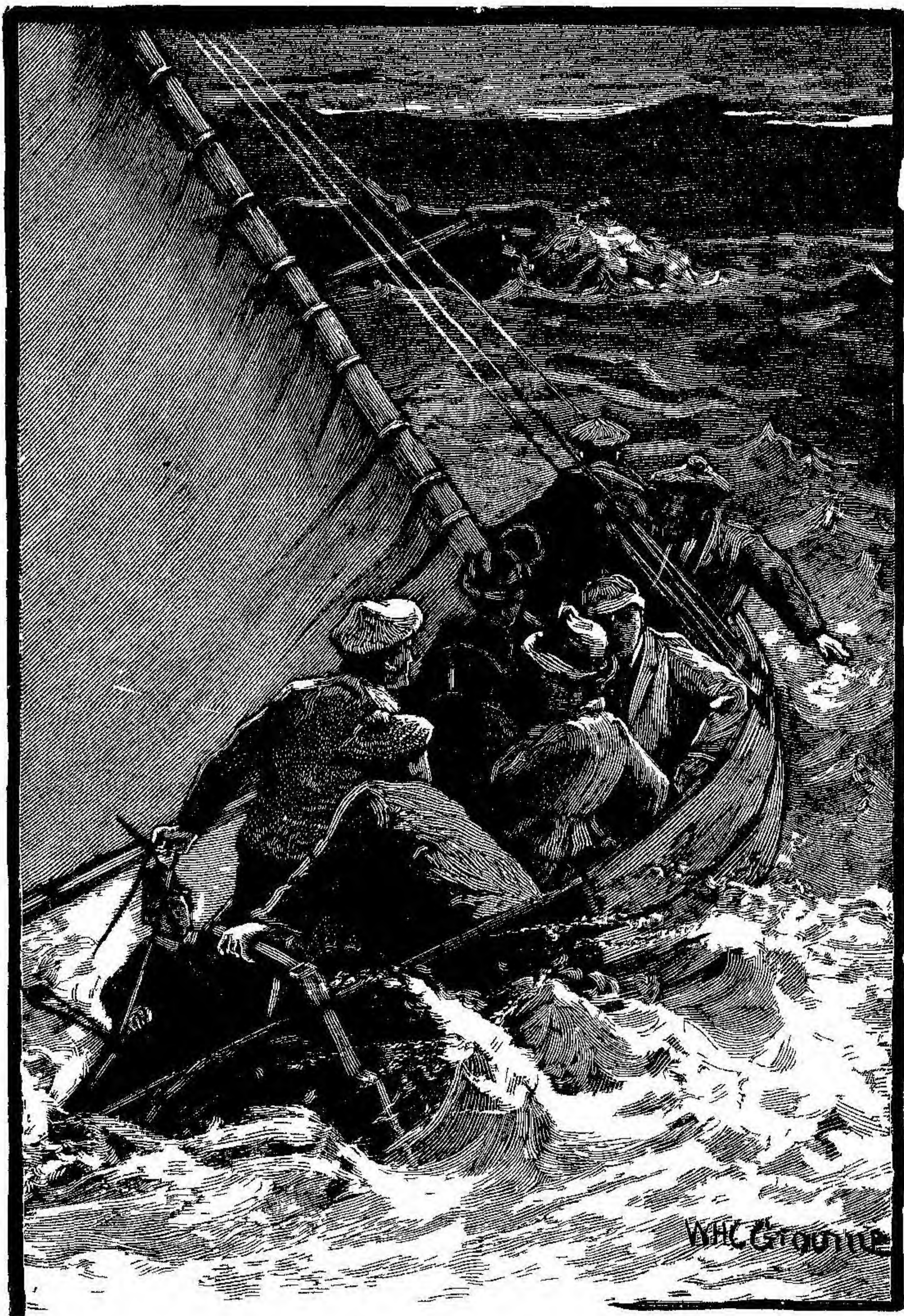


THE EAGLE CLIFF



**"THE BOAT LEANED OVER UNTIL HER LEE GUNWALE ALMOST RAN
UNDER WATER."**

[p. 220.]

THE EAGLE CLIFF

A Tale of the Western Isles

BY

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AUTHOR OF "FIGHTING THE FLAMES," "POST HASTE," "THE IRON HORSE,"
"THE LIGHTHOUSE," "BLUE LIGHTS," ETC., ETC.



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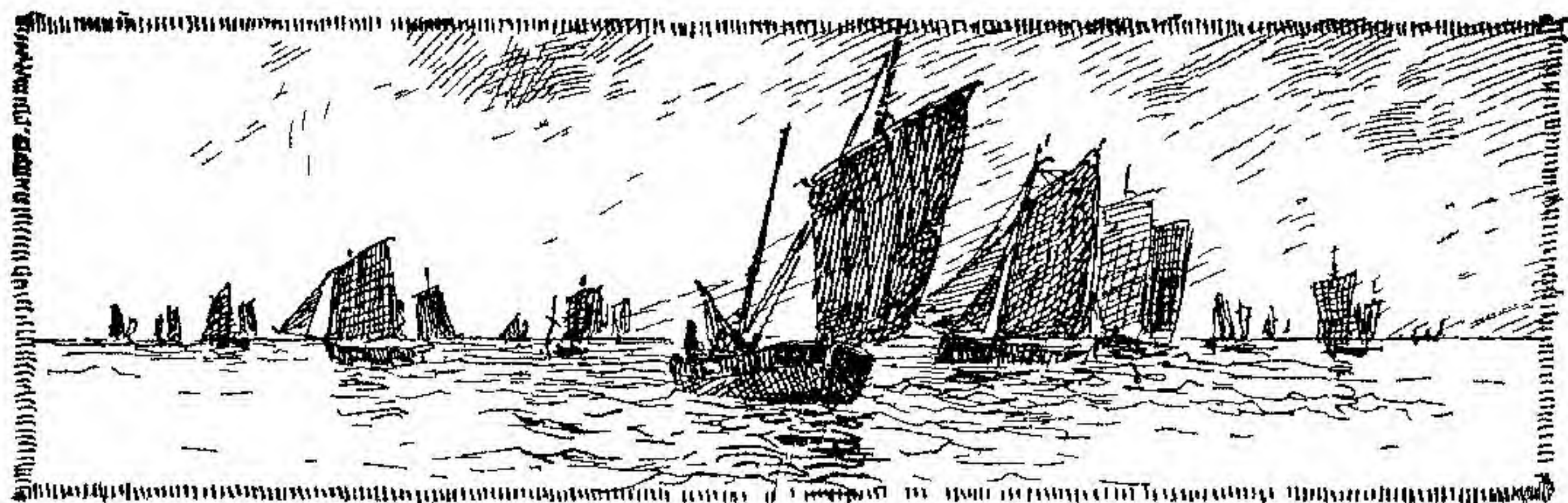


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THE EAGLE CLIFF.

A TALE OF THE WESTERN ISLES.

CHAPTER I.

BEGINS THE TALE—NATURALLY.

FROM the earliest records of history we learn that man has ever been envious of the birds, and of all other winged creatures. He has longed and striven to fly. He has also signally failed to do so.

We say “failed” advisedly, because his various attempts in that direction have usually resulted in disappointment and broken bones. As to balloons, we do not admit that they fly any more than do ships; balloons merely float and glide, when not otherwise engaged in tumbling, collapsing, and bursting.

This being so, we draw attention to the fact that the nearest approach we have yet made to the sensation of flying is that achieved by rushing down a long, smooth, steep hill-road on a well-oiled and perfect ball-bearings bicycle! Skating cannot compare with this, for that

requires exertion; bicycling down hill requires none. Hunting cannot, no matter how splendid the mount, for that implies a certain element of bumping, which, however pleasant in itself, is not suggestive of the smooth swift act of flying.

We introduce this subject merely because thoughts somewhat similar to those which we have so inadequately expressed were burning in the brain of a handsome and joyful young man one summer morning not long ago, as, with legs over the handles, he flashed—if he did not actually fly—down one of our Middlesex hills on his way to London.

Urgent haste was in every look and motion of that young man's fine eyes and lithe body. He would have bought wings at any price had that been possible; but, none being yet in the market, he made the most of his wheel—a fifty-eight inch one, by the way, for the young man's legs were long, as well as strong.

Arrived at the bottom of the hill the hilarious youth put his feet to the treadles, and drove the machine vigorously up the opposite slope. It was steep, but he was powerful. He breathed hard, no doubt, but he never flagged until he gained the next summit. A shout burst from his lips as he rolled along the level top, for there, about ten miles off, lay the great city, glittering in the sunshine, and with only an amber-tinted canopy of its usual smoke above it.

Among the tall elms and in the flowering hedgerows between which he swept, innumerable birds warbled or twittered their astonishment that he could fly with such

heedless rapidity through that beautiful country, and make for the dismal town in such magnificent weather. One aspiring lark overhead seemed to repeat, with persistent intensity, its trill of self-gratulation that it had not been born a man. Even the cattle appeared to regard the youth as a sort of ornithological curiosity, for the sentiment, "Well, you *are* a goose!" was clearly written on their mild faces as he flew past them.

Over the hill-top he went—twelve miles an hour at the least—until he reached the slope on the other side; then down he rushed again, driving at the first part of the descent like an insane steam-engine, till the pace must have increased to twenty miles, at which point, the whirl of the wheel becoming too rapid, he was obliged once more to rest his legs on the handles, and take to repose, contemplation, and wiping his heated brow—equivalent this, we might say, to the floating descent of the sea-mew. Of course the period of rest was of brief duration, for, although the hill was a long slope, with many a glimpse of loveliness between the trees, the time occupied in its flight was short, and at the bottom a rustic bridge, with an old inn and a thatched hamlet, with an awkwardly sharp turn in the road beyond it, called for wary and intelligent guidance of this lightning express.

Swiftly but safely to the foot of the hill went John Barret (that was the youth's name), at ever-increasing speed, and without check; for no one seemed to be moving about in the quiet hamlet, and the old English inn had apparently fallen asleep.

A delicious undulating swoop at the bottom indicates the crossing of the bridge. A flash, and the inn is in rear. The hamlet displays no sign of life, nevertheless Barret is cautious. He lays a finger on the brake and touches the bell. He is half-way through the hamlet and all goes well; still no sign of life except—yes, this so-called proof of every rule is always forthcoming—except that there is the sudden appearance of one stately cock. This is followed immediately by its sudden and unstately disappearance. A kitten also emerges from somewhere, glares, arches, fuffs, becomes indescribable, and—is not! Two or three children turn up and gape, but do not recover in time to insult, or to increase the dangers of the awkward turn in the road which is now at hand.

Barret looks thoughtful. Must the pace be checked here? The road is open and visible. It is bordered by grass banks and ditches on either side. He rushes close to the left bank and, careering gracefully to the right like an Algerine felucca in a white squall, dares the laws of gravitation and centrifugal force to the utmost limitation, and describes a magnificent segment of a great circle. Almost before you can wink he is straight again, and pegging along with irresistible pertinacity.

Just beyond the hamlet a suburban lady is encountered, with clasped hands and beseeching eyes, for a loose hairy bundle, animated by the spirit of a dog, stands in the middle of the road, bidding defiance to the entire universe! The hairy bundle loses its head.

all at once, likewise its heart: it has not spirit left even to get out of the way. A momentary lean of the bicycle first to the left and then to the right describes what artists call "the line of beauty," in a bight of which the bundle remains behind, crushed in spirit but unhurt in body.

At the bottom of the next hill a small roadside inn greets our cyclist. That which cocks, kittens, dangers, and dogs could not effect, the inn accomplishes. He "slows." In front of the door he describes an airy circlet, dismounting while yet in motion, leans the lightning express against the wall, and enters. What! does that vigorous, handsome, powerful fellow, in the flush of early manhood, drink? Ay, truly he does.

"Glass of bitter, sir?" asks the exuberant landlord.

"Ginger," says the young man, pointing significantly to a bit of blue ribbon in his button-hole.

"Come far to-day, sir?" asks the host, as he pours out the liquid.

"Fifty miles—rather more," says Barret, setting down the glass.

"Fine weather, sir, for bicycling," says the landlord, sweeping in the coppers.

"Very; good-day."

Before that cheery "Good-day" had ceased to affect the publican's brain Barret was again spinning along the road to London.

It was the road on which the mail coaches of former days used to whirl, to the merry music of bugle, wheel, and whip, along which so many men and women had

plodded in days gone by, in search of fame and fortune and happiness : some, to find these in a greater or less degree, with much of the tinsel rubbed off, others, to find none of them, but instead thereof, wreck and ruin in the mighty human whirlpool ; and not a few to discover the fact that happiness does not depend either on fortune or fame, but on spiritual harmony with God in Jesus Christ.

Pedestrians there still were on that road, bound for the same goal, and, doubtless, with similar aims ; but mail and other coaches had been driven from the scene.

Barret had the broad road pretty much to himself.

Quickly he ran into the suburban districts, and here his urgent haste had to be restrained a little.

“What if I am too late !” he thought, and almost involuntarily put on a spurt.

Soon he entered the crowded thoroughfares, and was compelled to curb both steed and spirit. Passing through one of the less-frequented streets in the neighbourhood of Finchley Road, he ventured to give the rein to his willing charger.

But here Fortune ceased to smile—and Fortune was to be commended for her severity.

Barret, although kind, courteous, manly, sensitive, and reasonably careful, was not just what he ought to have been. Although a hero, he was not perfect. He committed the unpardonable sin of turning a street corner sharply ! A thin little old lady crossed the road at the same identical moment, slowly. They met !

Who can describe that meeting? Not the writer, for he did not see it, more's the pity! Very few people saw it, for it was a quiet corner. The parties concerned cannot be said to have seen, though they felt it. Both went down. It was awful, really, to see a feeble old lady struggling with an athlete and a bicycle!

Two little street boys, and a ragged girl appeared as if by magic. They always do!

“Oh! I say! Ain't he bin and squashed 'er?”

Such was the remark of one of the boys.

“Pancakes is plump to 'er,” was the observation of the other.

The ragged girl said nothing, but looked unspeakable things.

Burning with shame, trembling with anxiety, covered with dust and considerably bruised, Barret sprang up, left his fallen steed, and, raising the little old lady with great tenderness in his arms, sat her on the pavement with her back against the railings, while he poured out abject apologies and earnest inquiries.

Strange to say the old lady was not hurt in the least—only a good deal shaken and very indignant.

Stranger still, a policeman suddenly appeared in the distance. At the same time a sweep, a postman, and a servant girl joined the group.

Young Barret, as we have said, was sensitive. To become the object and centre of a crowd in such circumstances was overwhelming. A climax was put to his confusion, when one of the street arabs, observing the policeman, suddenly exclaimed, —

“Oh ! I say, 'ere's a bobby ! What a lark. Won't you be 'ad up before the beaks ? It'll be a case o' murder.”

“No, it won't,” retorted the other boy ; “it'll be a case o' manslaughter an' attempted suicide jined.”

Barret started up, allowing the servant maid to take his place, and saw the approaching constable. Visions of detention, publicity, trial, conviction, condemnation, swam before him.

“A reg'lar Krismas panty-mime for nuffin' !” remarked the ragged girl, breaking silence for the first time.

Scarcely knowing what he did, Barret leaped towards his bicycle, set it up, vaulted into the saddle, as he well knew how, and was safely out of sight in a few seconds.

Yet not altogether safe. A guilty conscience pursued, overtook, and sat upon him. Shame and confusion overwhelmed him. Up to that date he had been honourable, upright, straightforward ; as far as the world's estimation went, irreproachable. Now, in his own estimation, he was mean, false, underhand, sneaking !

But he did not give way to despair. He was a true hero, else we would not have had anything to write about him. Suddenly he slowed, frowned, compressed his lips, described a complete circle—in spite of a furniture van that came in his way—and deliberately went back to the spot where the accident had occurred ; but there was no little lady to be seen. She had been

conveyed away. The policeman was gone, the little boys were gone, the ragged girl, sweep, postman, and servant maid—all were gone, “like the baseless fabric of a vision,” leaving only new faces and strangers behind to wonder what accident and thin old lady the excited youth was asking about—so evanescent are the incidents that occur, and so busily pre-occupied are the human torrents that rush, in the streets of London!

The youth turned sadly from the spot and continued his journey at a slower pace. As he went along, the thought that the old lady might have received internal injuries and would die pressed heavily upon him. Thus, he might actually be a murderer, at the best a manslaughterer, without knowing it, and would carry in his bosom a dreadful secret and a terrible uncertainty to the end of his life!

Of course he could go to that great focus of police energy—Scotland Yard—and give himself up; but on second thoughts he did not quite see his way to that. However, he would watch the daily papers closely.

That evening, in a frame of mind very different from the mental condition in which he had set out on his sixty miles’ ride in the afternoon, John Barret presented himself to his friend and old schoolfellow, Bob Mabberly.

“You’re a good fellow, Barret; I knew you would come; but you look warm. Have you been running?” asked Mabberly, opening the door of his lodging to his friend. “Come in. I have news for you. Giles

Jackman has agreed to go. Isn't that a comfort? for, besides his rare and valuable sporting qualities, he is more than half a doctor, which will be important, you know, if any of us should get ill or come to grief. Sit down and we'll talk it over."

Now, it was a telegram from Bob Mabberly which led John Barret to suddenly undertake a sixty miles' ride that day, and which was thus the indirect cause of the little old lady being run down. The telegram ran as follows:—

"Come instanter. As you are. Clothes unimportant. Yacht engaged. Crew also. Sail, without fail, Thursday. Plenty more to say when we meet."

"Now, you see, Bob, with your usual want of precision, or care, or some such quality——"

"Stop, Barret. Do be more precise in the use of language. How can the want of a thing be a *quality*?"

"You are right, Bob. Let me say, then, that with your usual unprecision and carelessness you sent me a telegram, which could not reach me till late on Wednesday night, after all trains were gone, telling me that you sail, without fail, on Thursday, but leaving me to guess whether you meant Thursday morning or evening."

"How stupid! My dear fellow, I forgot that!"

"Just so. Well, to make sure of losing no time, instead of coming here by trains, which, as you know, are very awkward and slow in our neighbourhood, besides necessitating long waits and several changes,

I just packed my portmanteau, gun, rods, etc., and gave directions to have them forwarded here by the first morning train, then took a few winks of sleep, and at the first glimmer of daylight mounted my wheel and set off across country as straight as country roads would permit of—and—here I am."

"True, Barret, and in good time for tea too. We don't sail till morning, for the tide does not serve till six o'clock, so that will give us plenty of time to put the finishing touches to our plans, allow your things to arrive, and permit of our making—or, rather, renewing—our acquaintance with Giles Jackman. You remember him, don't you?"

"Yes, faintly. He was a broad, sturdy, good-humoured, reckless, little boy when I last saw him at old Blatherby's school."

"Just so. Your portrait is correct. I saw him last month, after a good many years' interval, and he is exactly what he was, but considerably exaggerated at every point. He is not, indeed, a little, but a middle-sized man now; as good-humoured as ever; much more reckless; sturdier and broader a great deal, with an amount of hair about his lip, chin, and head generally that would suffice to fit out three or four average men. He has been in India—in the Woods and Forests Department, or something of that sort—and has killed tigers, elephants, and such-like by the hundred, they say; but I've met him only once or twice, and he won't speak much about his own doings. He is home on sick-leave just now."

“Sick-leave! Will he be fit to go with us?” asked Barret, doubtfully.

“Fit!” cried Mabberly. “Ay, much more fit than you are, strong and vigorous though you be, for the voyage home has not only cured him; it has added superabundant health. . Voyages always do to sick Anglo-Indians, don’t you know? However ill a man may be in India, all he has to do is to obtain leave of absence and get on board of a ship homeward bound, and straightway health, rushing in upon him like a river, sends him home more than cured. So now our party is made up, yacht victualled, anchor tripped, and—‘all’s well that ends well.’”

“But all is not ended, Bob. Things have only begun, and, as regards myself, they have begun disastrously,” said Barret, who thereupon related the incident of the little old lady being run down.

“My dear fellow,” cried Mabberly, laughing, “excuse me, don’t imagine me indifferent to the sufferings of the poor old thing; but do you really suppose that one who was tough enough, after such a collision, to sit up at all, with or without the support of the railings, and give way to indignant abuse——”

“Not abuse, Bob, indignant looks and sentiments; she was too thorough a lady to think of abuse.”

“Well, well; call it what you please; but you may depend upon it that she is not much hurt, and you will hear nothing more about the matter.”

“That’s it! That’s the very thing that I dread,” returned Barret, anxiously. “To go through life with



"WHERE'LL I PUT IT, SOR?"

the possibility that I may be an uncondemned and unhung murderer is terrible to think of. Then I can't get over the meanness of my running away so suddenly. If any one had said I was capable of such conduct I should have laughed at him. Yet have I lived to do it—contemptibly, in cold blood."

"Contemptibly it may have been, but not in cold blood, for did you not say you were roused to a state of frenzied alarm at the sight of the bobby? and assuredly, although unhung as yet, you are not uncondemned, if self-condemnation counts for anything. Come, don't take such a desponding view of the matter. We shall see the whole affair in the morning papers before sailing, with a report of the old lady's name and condition—I mean condition of health—as well as your unmanly flight, without leaving your card; so you'll be able to start with an easy—— Ha! a cab! yes, it's Jackman. I know his manservant," said Mabberly, as he looked out at the window.

Another moment and a broad-chested man, of about five-and-twenty, with a bronzed face—as far as hair left it visible—a pair of merry blue eyes, and a hearty manner, was grasping his old schoolfellows by the hand and endeavouring to trace the likeness in John Barret to the quiet little boy whom he used to help with his tasks many years before.

"Man, who would have thought you could have grown into such a great long-legged fellow?" he said, stepping back to take a more perfect look at his friend, who returned the compliment by asking who could

have imagined that he would have turned into a Zambezian gorilla.

"Where'll I put it, sor?" demanded a voice of metallic bassness in the doorway.

"Down there—anywhere, Quin," said Jackman, turning quickly; "and be off as fast as you can to see after that rifle and cartridges."

"Yes, sor," returned the owner of the bass voice, putting down a small portmanteau, straightening himself, touching his forehead with a military salute, and stalking away solemnly.

"I say, Giles, it's not often one comes across a zoological specimen like that. Where did you pick him up?" asked Mabberly.

"In the woods and forests, of course," said Jackman; "where I have picked up everything of late—from salary to jungle fevers. He's an old soldier—also on sick-leave, though he does not look like it. He came originally from the west of Ireland, I believe; but there's little of the Irishman left, save the brogue and the honesty. He's a first-rate servant, if you know how to humour him, and, being a splendid cook, we shall find him useful."

"I hope so," said Mabberly, with a dubious look.

"Why, Bob, do you suppose I would have offered him as cook and steward if I had not felt sure of him?"

"Of course not; and I would not have accepted him if I had not felt sure of you, Giles, my boy; so come along and let's have something to eat."

“But you have not yet told me, Bob,” said Jackman, while the three friends were discussing their meal, “what part of the world you intend to visit. Does your father give you leave to go wherever you please, and stay as long as you choose?”

“No; he limits me to the Western Isles.”

“That’s an indefinite limitation. D’you mean the isles of the Western Pacific?”

“No; only those of the west of Scotland. And, to tell you the truth, I have no settled or definite plan. Having got leave to use the yacht all the summer on condition that I don’t leave our own shores, I have resolved to begin by running at once to the wildest and farthest away part of the kingdom, leaving ‘circumstances’ to settle the rest.”

“A circumstantial account of the matter, no doubt, yet rather vague. Have you a good crew?”

“Yes; two men and a boy, one of the men being skipper, and the nearest approach to a human machine you ever saw. He is a Highlander, a thorough seaman, hard as mahogany and about as dark, stiff as a poker, self-contained, silent, except when spoken to, and absolutely obedient.”

“And we set sail to-morrow, early?” asked Barret.

“Yes; after seeing the morning papers,” said Mabblerly with a laugh.

This, of course, turned the conversation on the accident, much to the distress of Barret, who feared that the jovial, off-hand reckless man from the “woods and forests” would laugh at and quiz him more

severely than his friend Bob. To his surprise and great satisfaction, however, he found that his fears were groundless, for Jackman listened to the account of the incident quite gravely, betrayed not the slightest tendency to laugh, or even smile; asked a good many questions in an interested tone, spoke encouragingly as to the probable result, and altogether showed himself to be a man of strong sympathy as well as high spirits.

Next morning found our three adventurers dropping down the Thames with the first of the ebb tide, and a slight breeze from the south-west, Mabberly and Jackman in the very small cabin looking after stores, guns, rods, etc., Barret anxiously scanning the columns of a newspaper, Quin and the skipper making each other's acquaintance with much of the suspicion observable in two bull-dogs who meet accidentally, the boy in the fore part of the vessel coiling ropes, and the remainder of the crew at the helm.

"Port! port! stiddy," growled the skipper.

"Port it is; steady," replied the steersman in a sing-song professional tone, as a huge steamer from the antipodes went slowly past, like a mighty leviathan of the deep.

"Is it to the north, south, east, or west we're bound for, captain?" asked Quin, with a voice like that of a conciliatory bassoon.

"I don't know where we're bound for," growled the skipper slowly. "Starboard a bit; stiddy!"

"Steady!" sang out the man at the tiller.

A few hours carried them into the German Ocean,

Here Quin thought he would try again for a little information.

“Sure it’s nor’-east we’re steerin’, captain,” he remarked in a casual way.

“No, it’s not,” growled the skipper, very much through his nose; “she’s headin’ west.”

“It’s to *somewhere* that coorse will take us in the ind, no doubt, if we carry on?” suggested Quin, interrogatively.

“Ay; oot to sea,” replied the skipper.

Quin was obliged to give it up for the time being.

For some time they were nearly becalmed; then, as the land dropped astern and the shades of night deepened, the wind fell altogether, and when the stars came out a profound calm prevailed over the gently undulating sea. The exuberant spirits of our three friends were subdued by the sweet influences around, and, as the hour for rest drew near, the conversation, which at first became fitful, dropped at last to silence.

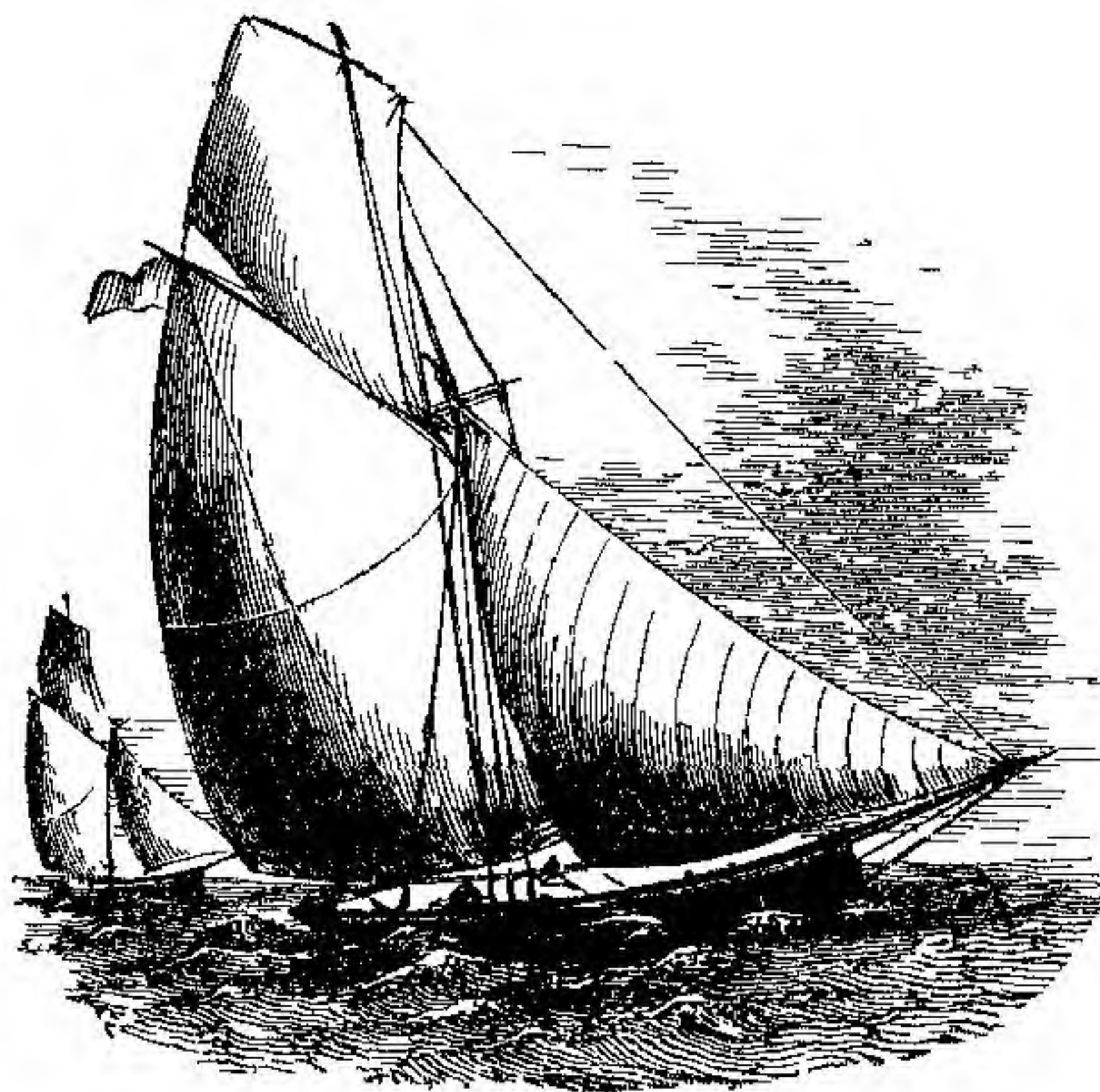
This was broken at length by Jackman saying, to the surprise of his companions, “What d’you say to reading a chapter before turning in? I’m fond of striking what’s called a key-note. If we begin this pleasure-trip with an acknowledgment of our dependence on God, we shall probably have a really pleasant time of it. What say you?”

Both Mabberly and Barret gladly agreed to their friend’s proposal—for both had been trained in God-fearing families—though neither would have had the courage to make the proposal himself. The crew

were invited to join, and thus family worship was established on board the *Fairy* from the first day.

Only one point is worthy of note in connection with this—although no one noted it particularly at the time, namely, that the portion of Scripture undesignedly selected contained that oft-quoted verse, “Ye know not what a day may bring forth.”

The truth of this was very soon thrust home upon them by stern experience





CHAPTER II.

THE VOYAGE AUSPICIOUSLY BEGUN AND PROMPTLY ENDED.

A VOYAGE up the east coast of Great Britain and through the Pentland Firth does not usually take a long time. When the vessel is a swift little schooner-yacht, and the breeze is stiff as well as fair, the voyage is naturally a brief one.

Everything favoured the little *Fairy*. Sun, moon, and stars cheered her, and winds were propitious, so that our voyagers soon found themselves skimming over the billows of the western sea.

It was one part of Mabberly's plan that he and his friends should do duty as part of the crew. He was himself accustomed to the handling of yachts, and Barret he knew had been familiar with the management of boats from childhood.

"You can steer, of course?" he had asked Giles Jackman almost as soon as they were fairly at sea.

"Well, ye—es, oh yes. No doubt I could steer if I were to try."

"Have you never tried?" asked his friend in surprise.

“Oh yes, I have tried—once. It was on an occasion when a number of us had gone on a picnic. We had to proceed part of the way to our destination by river in a small boat, which was managed by a regular old sea-dog—I forget his name, for we generally hailed him by the title of Old Salt. Some of the impatient members of the party suggested a little preliminary lunch. There are always people ready to back up impatient suggestions! It was agreed to, and Old Salt was ordered to open the provision basket, which had been stowed away in the bows of the boat. ‘Would you steer, sir?’ said Old Salt to me, as he rose to go forward. ‘Certainly, with pleasure,’ said I, for, as you know, it’s an old weakness of mine to be obliging! Well, in a few minutes they were all eating away as if they’d had no breakfast, while we went merrily down the river, with the current and a light breeze in our favour.

“Suddenly Old Salt shouted something that was smothered in its passage through a bite of sandwich. I looked up, and saw a native canoe coming straight towards us. ‘Port!’ roared Old Salt, in an explosion that cleared away half the sandwich. ‘No, thankee; I prefer sherry,’ said I. But I stopped there, for I saw intuitively from the yell with which he interrupted me that something was wrong. ‘*Hard* a-port!’ he cried, jumping up and scattering his rations. I shoved the tiller hard to the side that suggested itself, and hoped for the best. The worst followed, for we struck the native canoe amidships, as it was steering wildly

out of our way, and capsized it ! There were only two men in it, and they could swim like ducks ; but the river was full of alligators, and two sharp-set ones were on the scent instantly. It is my opinion that those two natives would then and there have been devoured, if we had not run in between and made such a splashing and hullabaloo with boat-hook, oars, and voices, that the monsters were scared away. I have never steered since that day."

"I don't wonder ; and, with my consent, you shall not steer now," said Mabberly, laughing. "Why, Giles, I was under the impression that you understood everything, and could do almost anything !"

"Quite a mistake, Bob, founded in error or superstition. You have confused the will with the deed. I am indeed willing to *try* anything, but my capacity for action is limited, like my knowledge. In regard to the higher mathematics, for instance, I know nothing. Copper-mining I do not understand. I may say the same with reference to Tartar mythology, and as regards the management of infants under two years I am densely ignorant."

"But do you really know nothing at all about boats and ships, Giles ?" asked Barret, who being a good listener, did not always shine as a speaker.

"How can you ask such a question ? Of course I know a great deal about them. They float, they sail and row, they steer——"

"Rather badly sometimes, according to your own showing !" remarked Barret.

Having cleared the Pentland Firth, Mabberly consulted the skipper one morning as to the prospects of the weather. "Going to fall calm, I fear," he said, as McPherson came aft with his hands in his pilot-coat pockets.

"Ay, sir, that iss true, what-ē-ver."

To pronounce the last word correctly, the central "e" must be run into a long-drawn, not an interjectional, sound.

"More-ō-ver," continued the skipper, in his drawling nasal tone, "it's goin' to be thick."

Being a weather-wise man, the skipper proved to be right. It did come thick; then it cleared, and, as we have said, things became favourable until they got further out to sea. Then a fancy took possession of Mabberly—namely, to have a "spin out into the Atlantic and see how it looked!" It mattered not to Jackman or Barret what they did or where they went; the first being exuberantly joyous, the other quietly happy. So they had their run out to sea; but twenty-four hours of it sufficed—it became monotonous.

"I think we'd better go back now," suggested Mabberly.

"Agreed," said his companions.

"Iss it goin' back you'll be?" asked the skipper.

"Yes. Don't you think we may as well turn now?" said Mabberly, who made it a point always, if possible, to carry the approbation of the skipper with him.

"I think it wass petter if we had niver come oot."

"Why so, Captain?"

“Because it’s comin’ on to plow. Putt her roond, Shames.”

James McGregor, to whom the order was given, and who was the *other* man of the crew, obeyed. The yacht, which had latterly been beating against a head-wind, now ran gaily before it towards the Scottish coast, but when night closed in no outlying islands were visible.

“We wull hev to keep a sharp look-oot, Shames,” remarked the skipper, as he stopped in his monotonous perambulation of the deck to glance at the compass.

“Oo, ay,” responded McGregor, with the air of a man who knew that as well as his superior.

“What do you fear?” asked Mabberly, coming on deck at the moment to take a look at the night before turning in.

“I fear naething, sir,” replied McPherson, gravely.

“I mean, what danger threatens us?”

“None that I ken o’; but we’re makin’ the land, an’ it behooves us to ca’ canny.”

It may be well to remark here that the skipper, having voyaged much on all parts of the Scottish coast, had adopted and mixed up with his own peculiar English several phrases and words in use among the lowland Scots.

Next morning, when Mabberly again visited the deck, he found the skipper standing on the same spot where he had left him, apparently in the same attitude, and with the same grave, sleepless expression on his cast-iron features. The boy, Robin Tips, was at the

helm, looking very sleepy. He was an English boy, smart, active, and wide-awake—in the slang sense—in which sense also we may add that he was “cheeky.”

But neither the skipper nor Tips was very visible at the distance of three yards, owing to a dense fog which prevailed. It was one of those white, luminous, dry fogs which are not at all depressing to the spirits, though obstructive to the eyes, and which are generally, if not always, accompanied by profound calm.

“Has it been like this long?” asked Mabblerly, after the first salutations.

“Ay, sir, a coot while.”

“And have we made no progress during the night?”

“Oo, ay, a coot bit. We should nae be far off some o’ the islands noo, but it’s hard to say, wi’ naither sun, min, nor stars veesible to let us fin’ oot where we are.”

Jackman and Barret came on deck at the moment, closely followed by Quin, who, quietly ignoring the owner of the yacht, went up to his master and said,—

“Tay’s riddy, sor.”

“Breakfast, you mean,” said Mabblerly, with a smile.

“Sure I wouldn’t conterdick ye, sor, av ye was to call it supper—but it was tay that I put in the pot.”

At breakfast the conversation somehow turned upon boats—ship’s boats—and their construction.

“It is quite disgraceful,” said Jackman, “the way in which Government neglects that matter of boats. Some things, we know, will never be generally adopted

unless men are compelled to adopt them. Another biscuit, Barret."

"Instance something, Giles," said Mabberly, "and pass the butter. I hate to hear sweeping assertions of an indefinite nature, which no one can either corroborate or confute."

"Well, there is the matter of lowering boats into the water from a ship's davits. Now, I'll be bound that the apparatus for lowering your little punt astern is the ordinary couple of blocks—one at the stem, the other at the stern?"

"Of course it is. What then?"

"Why, then, don't you know what would happen if you were lowering that boat full of people in a rough sea, and the man at the bow failed to unhook his block at the exact same moment as the man at the stern?"

"Yes, I know too well, Giles, for I have seen it happen. The boat, on the occasion I refer to, was hung up by one of the blocks, all the people were dropped into the water, and several of the women and children drowned. But how is Government to remedy that?"

"Thus, Bob, thus. There is a splendid apparatus invented by somebody which holds fast the two blocks. By means of an iron lever worked by *one* man, the rod is disengaged from both blocks at the same instant. You cannot work it wrong if you tried to do so. Now, the Government has only to compel the adoption of that apparatus in the Royal and Merchant Navies, and the thing is done."

"Then, again," continued Jackman, devouring food

more ravenously in proportion as he warmed with his subject, "look at the matter of rafts. How constantly it happens that boats get swamped and lost while being launched in cases of shipwreck at sea, and there is nothing left for the crews and passengers, after the few remaining boats are filled, save loose spars or a hastily and ill-made raft; for of course things cannot be well planned and constructed in the midst of panic and sudden emergency. Now, it has been suggested, if not actually carried out, that mattresses should be made of cork, with bands and straps to facilitate buckling them together, and that a ship's chairs, tables, campstools, etc., should be so constructed as to be convertible into rafts, which might be the means of saving hundreds of lives that would, under present arrangements, inevitably be lost. Why, I ask, does not Government see to this? have a special committee appointed to investigate, find out the best plan, and compel its adoption? Men will never do this. They are too obstinate. What's wanted is that our ladies should take it up, and howl with indignation till it is done."

"My dear Giles, ladies never howl," said Barret, quietly tapping the end of an egg; "they smile, and gently insinuate—that is always sufficient, because irresistible!"

"Well, being a bachelor I cannot say much on that point," returned Jackman. "But I was not aware that *you* were married?"

"Neither am I; but I have a mother and sisters, aunts and cousins, and I know their ways."

"If such are their ways, I must get you to introduce

me to them," said the woods-and-forester. "Come on deck, now, and I will give you a practical illustration of what might be done."

Jackman, being an enthusiast, always went at things "with a will."

"Bring me a hen-coop, Quin," he said to the steward, who, having so far completed his morning work, and consumed his morning meal, was smoking his pipe, seated on the rail beside Tips. Tips was an admirer of the Irishman, and, in consequence, an imitator as far as he dared and was permitted.

"Lend a hand, ye spalpeen," said Quin, going forward, and quickly returning with the coop, from which a cackling of strong remonstrance issued.

"Will ye have the other wan too, sor?"

"Yes, and the main-hatch besides, and a lot of spun-yarn. Of course that's not strong enough for real service, but it will do for illustration."

In a few minutes the two hen-coops were placed face to face and lashed firmly together, despite the remonstrative poultry. Then the main-hatch was laid upon the top, and fixed there by means of the iron rings at its four corners.

"Now, Quin, fetch four of the cabin chairs," said the operator, "and observe, gentlemen, how much more easily and quickly this would have been accomplished if the coops, and hatch, and chairs had been made to fit into each other, with a view to this very purpose, with strong straps and buckles in handy positions. Now, then, for the chairs."

At each corner of this extemporised raft Jackman fastened one of the cabin chairs, pointing out, as he did so, that there was no limit to the extension of the raft.

“You see,” he continued, “all you would have to do, if the ship were properly fitted out, would be to add chair to chair, bench to bench, cork mattress to mattress, until your raft was as big as you wanted; or you could make two or three rafts, if preferable.”

“But sure, sor, it would be an unstiddy machine intirely, an’ given to wobblin’,” said Quin, who was one of those privileged men who not only work for their wages, but generously throw their opinions into the bargain.

“It would not be more unsteady than the waves, Quin; and as to wobbling, that would be an advantage, for a rigid raft in a rough sea would be more liable to be damaged than one that was pliable.”

The discussion about rafts and ship’s boats which thus began was continued with much interest till lunch-time, for it chanced that John Barret was one of those men whose tendency of heart and mind is to turn everything to its best uses, and generally to strive after the highest point of perfection in everything, with a view to the advancement of human felicity. This tendency called into exercise his inventive faculties, inducing him to search after improvements of all descriptions. Thus it was natural that he and Jackman should enter into a keen controversy as to what was the best method of constructing the raft in detail; and

that, when the faithful Quin announced lunch as being "riddy, sor," the life-saving machine was left in an incomplete state on the deck.

The interest attaching to this discussion had helped the three comrades and crew alike to tide over what might otherwise have proved a tedious forenoon, for during the whole of that day the dense fog and profound calm continued.

On returning to the deck the discussion was continued for a time, but gradually the interest flagged, then other subjects engaged attention, and the raft was finally allowed to lie undisturbed and forgotten.

"I don't know how it is," said Bob Mabberly; "but somehow I always feel a depression of spirits in a fog at sea."

"Explanation simple enough," returned Jackman; "are we not constantly reading in the papers of ships being run down in fogs? Where there is risk there is always in some minds anxiety—in your case you call it depression of spirits."

"Your explanation, Giles, uncomplimentary to me though it be, might have some force if we were just now in the Channel, where being run down in fog is an event of frequent occurrence; but here, in a comparatively unfrequented sea, it would be strange indeed were I to be influenced by such possibilities. What say you, Captain?"

McPherson, who had sauntered towards the group, gazed in the direction where the horizon would have been visible had the fog been absent, and said,—

“Hm !—weel——” and then stopped, as if for the purpose of mature consideration. The audience waited for the announcement of the oracle’s opinion.

“Oo ay—weel, ye see, many persons are strangely influenced by possibeelities, what-ē-ver. There is a maiden aunt o’ my own—she wass niver marrit, an’ she wass niver likely to be, for besides bein’ poor an’ plain, an’ mittle-aged, which are not in my opeenion objectionable, she had an uncommon bad temper. Yet she wass all her life influenced by the notion that half the young men o’ the place wass wantin’ to marry her ! though the possibeelities in her case wass fery small.”

“I should like to ’ave know’d that old gurl !” whispered Tips to Quin.

“Howld your tongue, ye spalpeen !” whispered his friend in reply.

“Have you any idea, Captain, where we are now ?” asked Jackman.

“Oo ay, we’re somewhere’s wast’ard o’ the Lewis. But whether wast, nor’-wast, or sooth-wast, I could not say preceesely. The nicht, ye see, wass uncommon dark, an’ when the fog came doon i’ the mornin’, I could na’ feel sure we had keepit the richt coorse, for the currents hereabouts are strang. But we’ll see whan it comes clear.”

“Do you believe in presentiments, Giles ?” asked Barret, in an unusually grave tone.

“Of course I do,” answered Jackman. “I have a presentiment just now that you are going to talk nonsense.”

Barret was not, however, to be silenced by his friend's jest.

"Listen," he said, earnestly, as he rose and stood in an attitude of intense attention. "It may be imagination playing with the subjects of our recent conversation, but I cannot help thinking that I hear the beating of paddles."

"Keep a sharp look-out, Shames," cried the skipper, suddenly, as he went forward with unwonted alacrity.

A few minutes more and the sound which had at first been distinguished only by Barret's sharp ear, became audible to all—the soft regular patting of a paddle-wheel steamer in the distance, yet clearly coming towards them. Presently a shrill sound, very faint but prolonged, was heard, showing that she was blowing her steam whistle as a precaution.

"Strange, is it not, that the very thing we have been talking about should happen?" said Mabblerly.

"Nay," returned Jackman, lightly, "we were talking about being run down, and we have not yet come to that."

"The strangest thing of all to me," said Barret, "is that, with a wide ocean all round, vessels should ever run into each other at all, at least on the open sea, for there is only one line, a few feet wide, in favour of such an accident, whereas there are thousands of miles against it."

Jackman, who was a great theorist, here propounded a reason for this.

"If vessels would only hold straight on their courses,

you see," he said, "the accident of collision would be exceedingly rare, for, although thousands of ships might pass near to each other, not one in ten thousand would meet; but when vessels come pretty near, their commanders sometimes become anxious, take fancies into their heads, as to each having forgotten the 'rules of the road,' and each attempting to correct the other—as we do sometimes in the streets—they bring about the very disaster they are trying to avoid."

"Had we not better ring the bell, Captain?" cried Mabberly, in rising excitement.

"Oo ay, if you think so, sir. Ring, poy!"

The boy, who was getting alarmed, seized the tongue of the ship's bell, and rang with all his might. Whether this had the effect to which Jackman had referred, we cannot tell, but next moment what appeared to be a mountain loomed out of the mist. The steam-whistle had been silent for some time, but as soon as the bell was heard it burst forth with increased fury. From the instant her form was dimly seen the fate of the yacht was sealed. There was a wild shouting on board the steamer, but there was no time for action.

"Starboard hard!" was the cry.

"Starboard it is!" was the immediate answer. But before the helm could act, the great rushing mass struck the *Fairy* amidships, and literally cut her in two!

The awful suddenness of a catastrophe which those

on board had just been arguing was all but impossible seemed to have paralyzed every one, for no one made the slightest effort to escape. Perhaps the appearance of the wall-like bow of the steamer, without rope or projection of any kind to lay hold of, or jump at, might have conveyed the swift perception that their case was hopeless. At all events, they all went under with the doomed yacht, and nothing was left in the wake of the leviathan but a track of foam on the mist-encumbered sea.

But they were not lost! One after another the wrecked party rose struggling to the surface, and all of them could swim except the boy.

Giles Jackman was the first who rose. Treading water and brushing the hair out of his eyes, he gazed wildly about. Barret came up close beside him, almost a moment later. He had barely taken breath, when the others rose at various distances. A cry not far from him caused him to turn. It was poor Robin Tips, struggling for life. A few powerful strokes carried Barret alongside. He got behind the boy, caught him under the armpits, and thus held him, at arm's length, until he could quiet him.

"There is a spar, thank God! Make for it, Barret, while I see to Quin," shouted Jackman.

As he spoke, they could hear the whistle of the steamer rushing away from them.

Barret forcing himself breast-high out of the water, glanced quickly round and caught sight of the floating spar to which his companion had referred. Although

only a few yards off, the fog rendered it almost invisible.

“Are you quiet now?” demanded Barret, in a stern voice, for the terrified boy still showed something like a hysterical determination to turn violently round and grasp his rescuer in what would probably have turned out to be the grip of death.

“Yes, sir, oh! yes. But d—don’t let me go! M—mind, I can’t swim!”

“You are perfectly safe if you simply do nothing but what I tell you,” returned Barret, in a quiet, ordinary tone of voice, that reassured the poor lad more than the words.

By way of reply he suddenly became motionless, and as limp as a dead eel.

Getting gradually on his back, and drawing Tips slowly on to his chest, so that he rested with his mouth upwards, and his head entirely out of the water, Barret struck out for the spar, swimming thus on his back.

On reaching it, he found to his surprise that it was the experimental raft, and that the captain, Mabberly, and McGregor were already clinging to it.

“Won’t bear us all, I fear,” said Mabberly; “but thank God that we have it. Put the boy on.”

In order to do this, Barret had to get upon the raft, and he found that it bore him easily as well as the boy.

“Have you seen Jackman?” asked Mabberly.

“Yes,” replied Barret, rising and looking round.

“Here he comes, towing Quin, I think, who seems to be stunned. Hallo! This way—hi! Giles!”

But Giles suddenly ceased to swim, turned over on his back, and lay as if dead.

“Rescue, Bob, rescue!” shouted Barret, plunging into the water. Mabberly followed, and soon had hold of Giles and his man by the hair.

“All right!” said Jackman, turning round; “I was only taking a rest. No one lost, I hope?”

“No; all safe, so far.”

“You can tow him in now. I’m almost used up,” said Jackman, making for the raft. “He’s only stunned, I think.”

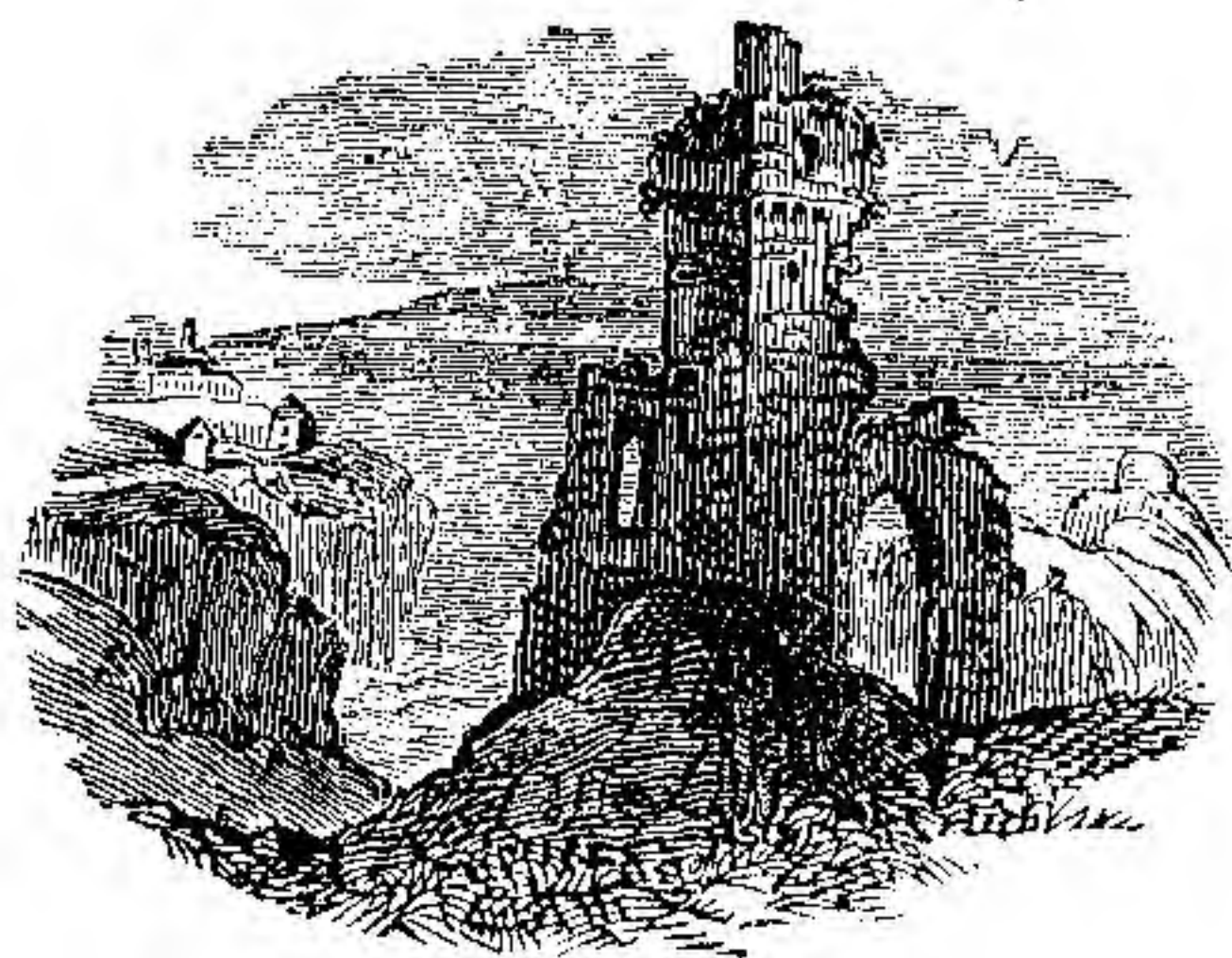
It was found that the Irishman had in truth been only stunned when they lifted him on to the raft, for he soon began to show signs of returning life, and a large bump on his head sufficiently explained the nature of his injury.

But when the whole party had cautiously clambered up on the raft it sank so deep that they scarcely dared to move. To make matters worse, they clearly distinguished the steamer’s whistle going farther and farther away, as if she were searching for them in a wrong direction. This was indeed the case, and although they all shouted singly and together, the whistle grew fainter by degrees, and finally died away.

With feelings approaching to despair, the crew of the frail raft began to talk of the prospect before them, when they were silenced by a slight movement in the mist. The white curtain was lifted for a few yards,

and revealed to their almost incredulous eyes a rocky shore, backed by a range of precipitous cliffs, with a wild mountainous region beyond.

As the sea was still perfectly calm, there was no surf. Our castaways, therefore, with the exception of Quin and the boy, quietly slipped into the water, and, with thankful hearts, propelled the raft vigorously towards the shore.





CHAPTER III.

THE WRECK IS FOLLOWED BY REPOSE, REFRESHMENT,
SURPRISE, AND DISASTER.

THE distance from land was not more than a few hundred yards; nevertheless, it occupied a considerable time to pass over that space, the raft being ill-adapted for quick progression through the water.

Close to the shore there was a flat rock, to which, as they approached it, their attention was drawn by the appearance of what seemed to be living creatures of some sort. Quin and Robin Tips, sitting on the raft, naturally saw them first.

"I do belave it's men, for they're liftin' their hids an' lookin' at us. Av it was the South Says, now, I'd say they was saviges peepin' at us over the rocks."

"P'raps they're boys a-bathin'," suggested Tips.

"Are they white?" asked Captain McPherson, who, being chin-deep in the water and behind the raft, could not see the rock referred to.

"No; sure they seem to be grey, or blue."

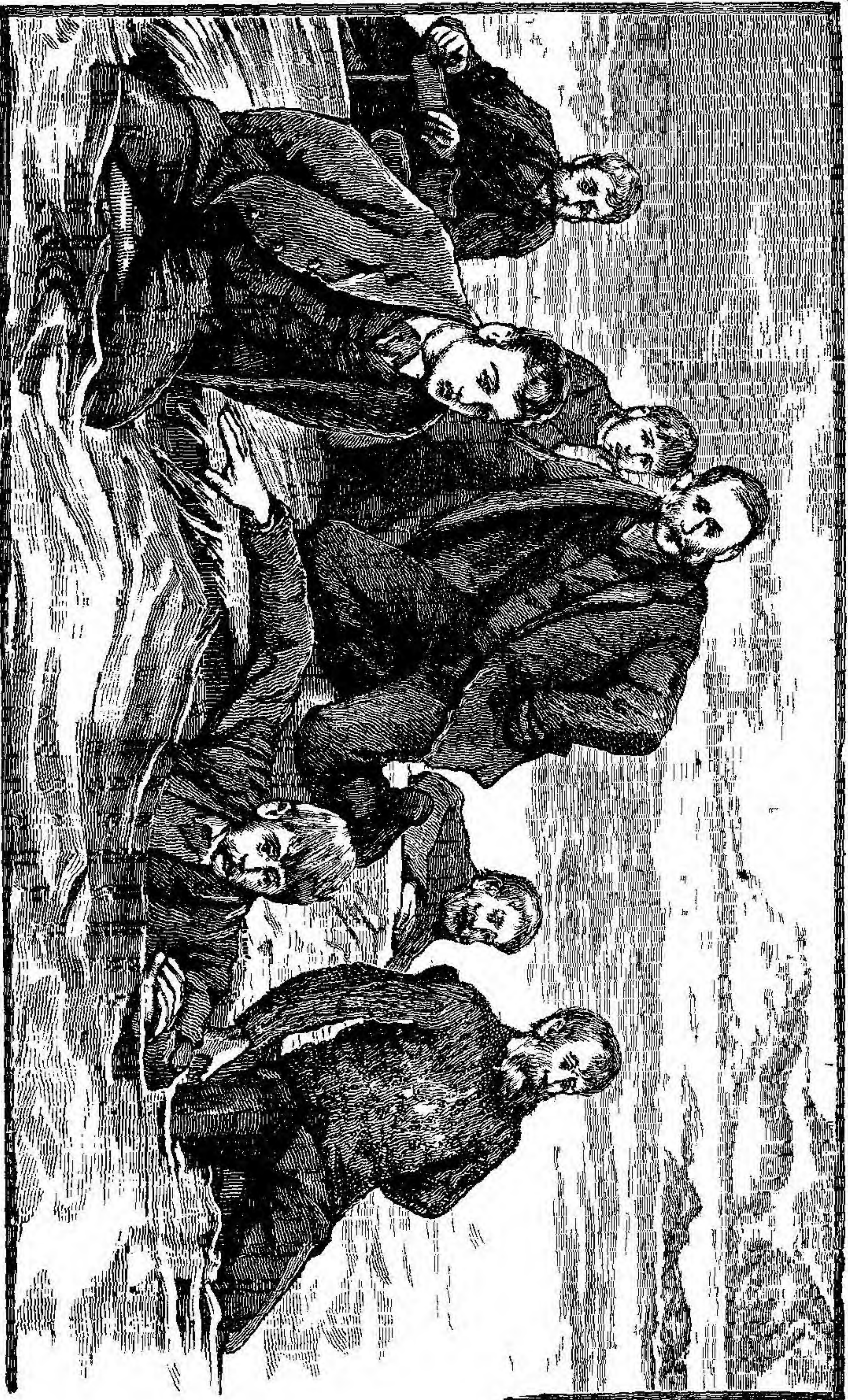
“Oo, they’ll be seals,” returned the skipper, nasally—a tone which is eminently well adapted for sarcastic remark without the necessity of elaborate language.

“In coorse they is,” said Tips; “don’t you see they’re a-heavin’ up their tails as well as their ’eads?”

On advancing a few yards farther, all doubt upon the question was put at rest. The animals, of which about a dozen were enjoying themselves on the rock, raised themselves high on their flippers and gazed, with enormous eyes, at the strange-looking monster that was coming in from the sea! Thus they remained, apparently paralyzed with astonishment, until the raft was within pistol-shot, and then, unable to endure the suspense longer, they all slipped off into the sea.

A few minutes later and the raft struck on the shore. And well was it for the party that the weather chanced to be so fine, for if there had been anything like a breeze, their frail contrivance would inevitably have been dashed to pieces. Even a slight swell from the westward would have raised such a surf on that rugged shore that it would have been impossible for the best of swimmers to have landed without broken limbs, if not loss of life. As it was, they got ashore not only without difficulty, but even succeeding in hauling the raft up on the beach without much damage to its parts—though, of course, the unfortunate fowls in the hen-coops had all perished!

While Mabberly and the others were engaged in securing the raft, Barret was sent off along shore with directions to ascertain whether there was any habitation



"I DO BELAIVE ITS MEN FOR THEY'BE LIFTIN' THEIR HIDS AN' LOOKIN' AT US."

near. To his right the high cliffs came down so close to the sea that it seemed very improbable that any cottage or hamlet could be found in that direction. He therefore turned towards the left, where the cliffs receded some distance from the shore, leaving a narrow strip of meadow land.

Hurrying forward about a quarter of a mile, he stopped and looked about him. The sun was still high in the heavens—for the days are long and nights brief in that region during summer—and its rays had so far scattered the mists that all the low-lying land was clear, though the mountain range inland was only visible a short distance above its base. The effect of this was to enhance the weird grandeur of the view, for when the eye had traced the steep glens, overhanging cliffs, rugged water-courses, and sombre corries upward to the point where all was lost in cloud, the imagination was set free to continue the scenery to illimitable heights.

The youth was still gazing upward, with solemnized feelings, when there was presented to him one of those curious aspects of nature which are sometimes, though rarely, witnessed in mountainous regions. Suddenly an opening occurred in the clouds—or mist—which shrouded the mountain tops, and the summit of a stupendous cliff bathed in rich sunshine, was seen as if floating in the air. Although obviously part of the mountain near the base of which he stood, this cliff—completely isolated as it was—seemed a magical effect, and destitute of any real connection with earth.

While he was looking in wonder and admiration at

the sight, he observed a bird hovering about motionless in the blue vault high above the cliffs. Although inexperienced in such scenery and sights, Barret knew well enough that nothing but an eagle—and that of the largest size—could be visible at all at such a distance. Suddenly the bird sailed downwards with a grand circular sweep, and was lost among the shadows of the perpendicular rocks. A few minutes more and the mists drifted over the opening, causing the vision to disappear.

This was Barret's first view of the Eagle Cliff, which was destined to exercise a powerful and lasting influence upon his fortunes!

A few yards beyond this the explorer came upon a sheep track, and a little farther on he found one of those primitive roads which are formed in wild out-of-the-way places by the passage of light country carts, with the aid of a few rounded stones where holes required to be filled up, or soft places strengthened. Following it a short distance to a spot where it ran between a precipice and the shore, he came suddenly in sight of a wilderness of fallen rocks, which were varied in size from mere pebbles to masses the size of an omnibus. These had all fallen from a steep spur of the mountains which projected towards the sea of that place. The whole of the level land at the base of the spur was strewn with them; some being old, moss-covered and weather-worn, others fresh and sharp in outline, as if they had fallen only the previous winter, as probably they had, for the places from which they

had been dislodged could be seen still fresh and light-coloured nearly a thousand feet up on the riven cliffs. It was a species of desolation that powerfully recalled some scenes in Dante's "Inferno," and had a depressing effect on the youth's spirits, for nothing seemed more unlikely than the existence of a human habitation in such a place.

A new view of the matter broke upon him, however, when he suddenly became aware that a spot in the confused scene which he had taken to be a clump of withered bracken was in reality a red cow! Looking a little more narrowly at objects he soon perceived a hut among the rocks. It was so small and rude and rugged as almost to escape detection. A furious barking soon told that he had been seen, and two collie dogs rushed towards him with demonstrations that threatened him with immolation on the spot. The uproar put life into a few more clumps of red bracken, and produced a lively display of sheep and cattle throughout the region.

Barret walked straight up to the door of the hut, and the collies withdrew from the attack—as most noisy demonstrators do when treated with silent indifference.

"Is there any one inside?" he asked of a bare-legged, shaggy-headed boy, who came out and gazed at him, apparently with his mouth as well as his eyes.

"Na," answered the boy.

"Any other cottages or houses near this?"

"Ay; yonder."

The boy pointed in the direction of the sea, where, in a stony nook between two jutting masses of rock, nestled about a dozen huts built of boulder stones gathered from the seashore. So small were these huts, and so stupendous the rocks around them, that they might easily have been overlooked by a careless eye. So might the half-dozen fishing-boats that lay in the little cove beside them.

A stream or rivulet—better known in Scotland as a burn—ran past the hamlet, formed a pool just below it, and dropped into the cove close to the place where the boats lay.

Rejoiced to find even the poorest kind of shelter in such a place, Barret hastened down to the cove, and, tapping at the door of the largest of the cottages, was bidden “come in” by a soft voice.

Entering, he was surprised to find a neatly though plainly furnished room, which was evidently the kitchen of the house—indeed, the sole room, with the exception of an off-shoot closet. The large open fireplace contained a peat fire on the hearth, over which hung a bubbling pot. There were two box-beds opposite the fire, and in the wall which faced the door there was a very small window, containing four panes of glass, each of which had a knot in the middle of it. One of them also presented the phenomenon of a flattened nose, for the boy with the ragged head had rushed down and stationed himself there to observe the result of the unexpected and singular visit.

Beside the window, in a homely arm-chair, sat an

invalid girl with pale thin cheeks, bright blue eyes, and long flaxen hair. If not pretty, she was, at all events, extremely interesting, and possessed the great charm of a winning smile.

Apologising for causing her alarm by his damp, dishevelled, and sudden appearance, Barret asked if there were any men about the place.

No, there were none there at the moment ; most of them being out after the sheep and cattle, and some gathering peat ; or away in the boats.

“ But surely they have not left you all by yourself ? ” said Barret, struck not only by the appearance of the girl, but by the comparative refinement of her language.

“ Oh no ! ” she replied, with a slight smile ; “ they look well after me. Mrs. Anderson has only gone to fetch some peats. But where have you come from, sir ? Your clothes are all wet ! ”

“ You are right. I have just been saved from drowning, through God’s mercy, along with my companions.”

Here Barret gave her a brief outline of the recent disaster, and then asked if Mrs. Anderson was her mother.

“ No ; she is my aunt, but she is very good to me ; takes as much care of me as if I was her own daughter. I don’t belong to this place. They have sent me here for my health.”

At this point they were interrupted by Mrs. Anderson herself, who entered with a load of peat, which she

flung down, shook her fist at the nose-flattener outside, and turned in astonishment to her visitor.

Of course our shipwrecked friend had to retail his story to the woman, and then learned from her that the island was a very large one, with a name unpronounceable by English lips, that it was very thinly inhabited, that it consisted almost entirely of pasture land, and that "the laird" owned a large portion of it, including the little fishing village of "Cove."

While the woman was speaking an elderly man entered, whom she introduced as her husband Ian. To him Barret had to re-repeat his story, and then asked if he and his friends could obtain shelter in the village for the night.

"Iss it shelter ye'll be wantin'? Ye'll hev that an' welcome, though it will be of the poorest. But in the mornin' ye'll gang up to the hoose, for the laird wud be ill-pleased if we keepit ye here."

"Pray, who is this laird?" asked Barret; "your wife has already mentioned him."

"Maister Gordon is his name. He lives near the heed o' Loch Lossie. It iss over eight mile from here," said Ian; "an' a coot shentleman he iss, too. Fery fond o' company, though it iss not much company that comes this way, for the steam-poats don't veesit the loch reg'lar or often. He'll be fery glad to see you, sir, an' to help ye to git home. But we'd petter be goin' to tell your freen's that we can putt them up for the nicht. I'll go pack with ye, an' we'll take the poy to help an' carry up their things."

"You forget that we have been wrecked," returned Barret with a laugh, "and have no 'things' to carry, except our own damp carcasses."

"That's true, sir, but we'll be none the worse o' the poy, what-ē-ver. Come away, Tonal," said Ian, as they started back along the shore. "It iss under the Eagle Cliff where ye came to laund, I make no doot?"

"Well, I suppose it was; at least, there is a range of cliffs close to the place where our raft struck."

"Oo ay—but it iss not the wee precipices, it iss the big hull behind them that we ca' the Eagle Cliff."

"Oh, indeed! I saw that cliff in a peculiar manner as I came along," said Barret giving a description of the scene.

"Ay; it iss sometimes seen like that," said Ian; "an' we often see the eagle, but it's no' possible to git a shot at that crater. The laird is real keen to bring it doon, for it plays the mischief among the lambs, an' him an' his freen's hes aften tried, but they hev not manicht it yet."

Thus chatting they soon reached the raft, and found the disconsolate party waiting impatiently for them.

"Shall we leave it where it lies, or drag it further up on the beach?" asked Mabblerly, referring to the raft.

"Ye petter haul it a wee higher up," said Ian, examining the machine with much interest; "for when it comes on to plow there's a heavy sea here. Weel, weel, but it iss a strange contrivance!"

"Ay; an' also a useful one," said the skipper, drily—at least as drily as was possible in the circumstances.

“Noo, shentlemen, I think we had petter be goin’.”

It was indeed time, for although the weather was warm and fine, the sun had set, and their damp garments began to feel uncomfortable.

At the Cove the whole party was accommodated in a single-roomed hut, which chanced to be empty at the time. Here the hospitable fishermen spread nets for bedding, and with plaids made up for the lack of blankets. They also kindled a large peat fire, and put on a pot of potatoes, and some splendid sea-trout, while Mrs. Anderson prepared oat-cakes at her own fire, and sent them in as required.

“Noo, shentlemen, ye’ll tak a tram?” said Ian, producing a black bottle.

Immeasurable was the astonishment of the Highlander when the gentlemen refused a dram.

“But—but, ye’ll catch yer death o’ cauld, if ye don’t!” he said, remonstratively, as he stood bottle and glass in hand.

“Thanks, friend,” replied Jackman, “but we have taken in so much salt water during our swim to land that we are not sure whether the whisky would agree with it.”

“Hoots! havers!” exclaimed Ian, pouring out some of the liquid; “ye’re jokin’.”

“In truth we are not, then,” said Mabblerly; “for we are all total abstainers.”

“Nonsense!” exclaimed Ian, who could not understand the principles or feelings of men who, after

a long exhausting swim in their clothes, were capable of refusing whisky! For it is to be remembered that, although the time we write of is comparatively recent, that remote island had not been visited by any apostle of temperance or total abstinence in regard to alcohol. Of course Ian had heard something of such principles, but he did not believe in them, and certainly did not practise them. “Hooiver, shentlemen,” he added, “if ye wunna tak it—here’s wushin’ your fery coot health!”

Raising the glass, he drained it without winking, as if the contents had been water, smacked his lips and put the bottle away.

It must not be supposed that all the crew of the late unfortunate *Fairy* witnessed this proceeding unmoved, for, although they had all been engaged on the understanding that no strong drink was to be allowed or consumed while the voyage lasted, not one of them was a pledged abstainer, and now that the voyage was ended it did seem as if the laws of the voyage should no longer be binding. Still there remained a feeling that, as long as they continued a united party, the spirit of the agreement should not be broken; therefore the skipper and “Shames” let the bottle pass with a sigh, and Quin followed suit with an undertoned remark to Tips that “he wouldn’t have belaved tim’tation to be so strong av he hadn’t wrastled wid it!”

By that time most of the men of the hamlet had returned, and a rig out of fisher clothes was lent to each of the unfortunates, so that they were enabled to pass

the night in comfort while their own garments were drying in front of a good fire.

“Is that sick girl your daughter, Ian?” asked Giles Jackman that night, as he walked on the shore with his host before retiring to rest.

“No, sir; she’s a niece—the daughter of a brother o’ mine who hes feathered his nest petter than me. He’s a well-to-do grocer in Oban, an’ hes geen his bairn a pretty good edication; but it’s my opeenion they hev all but killed her wi’ their edication, for the doctor has telt them to stop it altogether, an’ send her here for a change o’ air.”

“Indeed! An interesting child, and so well-mannered, too,” remarked Jackman.

“Humph! Nae doot she is. They do say that it’s because my brither has gotten an English wife. But for my pairt, oor weemen seem to me to be as weel mainered as the weemen sooth o’ the Tweed.”

“Quite as well, I doubt not; though I have not seen much of your countrywomen, Ian. Besides, good manners are to be judged by varying standards. What is good in the opinion of the Eskimo may be thought very bad by the Hindoo, and *vice versâ*. It is very much a matter of taste. The manners of your niece, at all events, are admirable. Now it is time to turn in. Good-night, Ian.”

The sun was high next morning when the wrecked men awoke, and began to feel the outcries of nature with reference to breakfast. Long before that time the men of Cove had gone off to the hills, the peat-hags,

or the sea, according to their respective callings. But Mrs. Anderson had a sumptuous breakfast of oatmeal porridge and fresh milk ready for the strangers.

“Musha ! but it’ll make me mouth wather all the afthernoon thinkin’ of it,” said Quin, on finishing his second plateful.

“It’s prime wittles,” remarked Tips, as he helped himself to more.

“Now, Barret, have you finished ?” asked Mabberly.

“No ; why ?”

“Because, in the first place, you are evidently eating too much for your health, and, in the second place, I want you to go up to what Ian calls the Hoose, as a deputation to the laird. You see, although we are forced, as it were, to throw ourselves on his hospitality, I don’t quite like to descend on him all at once with the whole strength of our party. It will be better for one of us to break the ice, and as you are the best-looking and most hypocritically urbane, when you choose, I think we could not do better than devolve the duty upon you.”

“Right, Bob, as usual ; but don’t you think,” said Barret, helping himself to another ladleful of the porridge, “that my going may cut in two directions ? Doubtless the laird would be agreeably surprised to meet with me ; but then that will raise his expectations so high, that he will be wofully disappointed on meeting with *you* !”

“Come, friends,” cried Jackman, “it is dangerous to play with edged tools immediately after a meal. My

medical knowledge assures me of that. I quite approve of Barret forming the deputation, and the sooner he starts off the better. The rest of us will assist Ian to fish in his absence."

Thus authorised and admonished, Barret finished breakfast, put on his own garments—which, like those of his companions, were semi-nautical—and sallied forth for an eight miles' walk over the mountains to the mansion of the laird, which lay on the other side of the Eagle's Cliff ridge, on the shores of Loch Lossie.

He was guided the first part of the journey by Tonal' with the ragged head, who, with an activity that seemed inexhaustible, led him up into wild and rugged places such as he had never before dreamed of—rocky fastnesses which, looked at from below, seemed inaccessible, even to goats, but which, on being attempted, proved to be by no means beyond the powers of a steady head and strong limbs.

Reaching the summit of a heather-clad knoll that projected from a precipitous part of the mountain-side, Barret paused to recover breath and look back at the calm sea. It lay stretched out far below him, looking, with its numerous islets in bird's-eye view, somewhat like a map. The mists had completely cleared away, and the sun was glittering on the white expanse like a line of light from the shore to the horizon. Never before had our Englishman felt so like a bird, both as to the point of vision from which he surveyed the glorious scene, and the internal sensation of joy which induced him not only to wish that he could fly, but

to think that a very little more of such exultation of spirit would enable him to do so!

“Is that the Cove down there?” he asked of the ragged companion who stood beside him.

“Ay, that’s the Cove!”

“Why, Donald, it looks like a mere speck in the scene from here, and the men look no bigger than crows.”

As this observation called for no answer none was given, and Donald seemed to regard his companion as one who was rather weak-minded.

“Have we come half-way yet, Donald?”

“No—no’ near.”

“Is it difficult to find the rest of the way from this point?”

“No; but it wad be diffeecult to miss it.”

“Well, Donald, my boy, I have a strong desire to be alone—that is, to try if I cannot go the rest of the way without guidance; so, if you will just give me a little direction, I’ll let you go home, and many thanks for coming thus far. Now, point out the landmarks.”

He turned, as he spoke, towards the grand mountain that still towered behind him.

“There’s naethin’ t’ pint oot,” returnel the boy; “ye’ve only t’ haud on by this sheep track till ee come close under the cliff yonder——”

“The Eagle Cliff?”

“Ay. It’ll bring ee to a cairt road, an’ ye’ve only to follow that through the pass, an’ haud on till ee

come to the hoose. Ye can see the hoose frae the other side o' the pass."

"And what is the 'hoose' called?" asked Barret.

"Kinlossie."

"Thank you. Good-bye, my boy."

A few coppers sent the youth of the ragged head away in high spirits. The young man watched him till he was concealed by a clump of small birch trees that hung like a fringe on the top of a neighbouring precipice. Barret had just turned to continue the ascent to the Eagle Cliff, whose frowning battlements still rose high above him, when a wild shout from the boy made him turn and look anxiously back. The place which he had reached was strewn with great masses of rock that had fallen from the cliffs. He was about to clamber on to one of these, in order to obtain a better view, when the cause of the shout became obvious. A splendid stag, frightened from its lair by the boy, burst from the birchwood, and, with antlers laid well back, bounded up the slope towards him. It was closely followed by two does.

Barret crouched at once behind the mass of rock, The deer, thinking, doubtless, only of the danger behind, had failed to observe him.

"Oh for Giles, with his rifle!" thought the youth, as the agile creatures passed within less than a hundred yards of him, and headed straight for the pass of the Eagle Cliff.

Scarcely had the thought occurred, when a flapping noise behind caused him to turn quickly. It was the

eagle himself, sailing majestically and slowly overhead, as though he knew full well that an Englishman without a gun was a harmless creature!

Considerably excited by these unexpected and, to him, stirring sights, Barret pushed steadily upward, and soon reached a part of the pass whence he could see the valley beyond, with a house in the far distance—which, of course, must be Kinlossie—standing in a clump of wood on the margin of an inlet of the sea, known by the name of Loch Lossie.

But a far more astonishing sight than anything he had beheld that morning was yet in store for Barret. On turning round a projecting rock at the foot of the Eagle Cliff, he suddenly came upon a young girl, lying on the road as if dead!

Springing towards her, he knelt and raised her head. There was no blood upon the face, which was deadly pale, and no apparent injury. She did not seem to breathe, but on feeling her pulse he fancied that he felt a flutter there. A feeling of desperate regret passed through him as he thought of his utter destitution alike of medical or surgical knowledge. But Barret was not by any means a helpless man. Running to one of the many streams of water which trickled from the cliff, he filled the top of his wideawake therewith, and, returning, laved the girl's face, and poured a little into her mouth.

His efforts were successful. She recovered consciousness, opened her eyes, and asked, with a confused look, what was the matter.

“ You must have had a fall, dear child ; but you’ll be better presently. Let me raise you.”

The girl tried to rise, but, with a sharp cry of pain, fell back again unconscious.

Barret soon ascertained that one of the poor girl’s arms was severely bruised, perhaps broken. He knew not what to do, but he knew that the greatest present evil was delay. He therefore wrapped her in the shepherd’s plaid which she wore, and raised her as gently as possible in his arms—making use of the plaid as a sort of sling, with part of it round his own neck. Then, thanking God for the strong limbs and muscles with which he had been endowed, he set off with vigorous tread for Kinlossie House.





CHAPTER IV.

THE FAMILY AT KINLOSSIE.

SERENITY was the prevailing feature in the character of old Allan Gordon, the laird of Kinlossie; but when that amiable, portly, grand, silver-headed old gentleman suddenly met an unknown young man of fine proportions carrying his favourite niece, wrapped up as a bundle in his arms, all his serenity disappeared, and he stared, glared, almost gasped, with mingled astonishment and consternation.

A very brief explanation, however, quickly sufficed to charge his susceptible spirit to overflowing with a compound of grave anxiety and heartfelt gratitude.

“Come in, my dear sir, come in; luckily our doctor is spending the day with me. But for you, my poor dear Milly might have been—— This way, to her own room. Are you sure the arm is broken?”

“I fear so,” replied Barret, entering the mansion; but before he could proceed farther his words were

drowned in a shriek of surprise from four little Gordons, aged from sixteen to four, who yelled rather than demanded to know what ailed their cousin—ranging from Archie's "What's wrong with Cousin Milly," to Flora's "Wass wong wid Cuzn Miwy?"

By that time Mrs. Gordon, a pleasant-voiced lady, with benignity in her looks, appeared on the scene, followed quickly by a man and several maid servants, all of whom added to the confusion, in the midst of which Cousin Milly was conveyed to her room and deposited on her bed. The family doctor, a rotund little man of fifty-five, was speedily in attendance.

"So fortunate that the doctor happens to be here," said the laird, as he led Barret to the library and offered him a glass of wine. "No! you don't drink? Well, well, as you please. Here, Duncan, fetch milk, lemonade, coffee, not, at once. You must be tired after carrying her so far, even though she *is* a light weight. But, forgive me; in my anxiety about my poor niece I have quite forgotten to ask either your name or how you came here, for no steamer has been to the island for a week past. Pray be seated, and, wherever you may be bound for ultimately, make up your mind that my house is to be your home for a week at least. We suffer no visitor ever to leave us under that period."

"You are very kind," returned the young man, smiling, "and I accept your proffered hospitality most gladly. My name is John Barret. I came to the other side of the island in a yacht, and swam on shore

in my clothes with six companions, spent the night at Cove, and have walked over here to make known these facts to you."

"You speak in riddles, my young friend," returned the laird, with an amused look.

"Yet I speak the truth," returned Barret, who thereupon gave a circumstantial account of the disaster that had befallen himself and his friends.

"Excuse me," said Mr. Gordon, rising; throwing up the window he shouted to a man who was passing at the moment, "Roderick, get the big waggonette ready to go to Cove, and bring it round here as fast as you can. You see," he added to Barret, "the road is considerably longer than the short cut by which you came, and we must have them all over here without delay. Don't distress yourself about room. We have plenty of accommodation. But come, I'll take you to your own room, and when you have made yourself comfortable, we will talk over your future plans. Just let me say, however, to prevent your mind running away on wrong ideas, that in the circumstances we won't allow you to leave us for two months. The post goes out to-morrow, so you can write to your father and tell him so."

Thus running on in a rich hearty voice, the hospitable Allan Gordon conducted Barret to a room in the southern wing of the rambling old edifice, and left him there to meditate on his good fortune, and enjoy the magnificent prospect of the island-studded firth or fiord from which the mansion derived its name.

While the waggonette was away for the rest of the wrecked party, the laird, finding that Milly's arm was not actually broken, though severely bruised, sat down to lunch with restored equanimity, and afterwards drove Barret in his dog-cart to various parts of his estate.

"Your friends cannot arrive for several hours, you see," he said on starting, "and we don't dine till seven; so you could not be better engaged than in making acquaintance with the localities of our beautiful island. It may seem a little wild to you in its scenery, but there are thousands of picturesque points, and what painters call 'bits' about it, as my sweet little Milly Moss will tell you when she recovers; for she is an enthusiastic painter, and has made innumerable drawings, both in water-colour and oils, since she came to stay here. I cannot tell you how grateful I am to you, Mr. Barret, for rescuing the poor girl from her perilous position."

"I count myself fortunate indeed in having been led to the spot so opportunely," said Barret; "and I sincerely hope that no evil effects may result from her injuries. May I ask if she resides permanently with you at Kinlossie?"

"I wish she did," said the laird, fervently; "for she is like a sunbeam in the house. No, we have only got the loan of her, on very strict conditions too, from her mother, who is a somewhat timid lady of an anxious temperament. I've done my best to fulfil the conditions, but they are not easy."

"Indeed! How is that?"

“Well, you see, my sister is firmly convinced that there is deadly danger in wet feet, and one of her conditions is that Milly is not to be allowed to wet her feet. Now you know it is not easy for a Londoner to understand the difficulty of keeping one’s feet dry while skipping over the mountains and peat-hags of the Western Isles.”

“From which I conclude that Mrs. Moss is a Londoner,” returned Barret, with a laugh.

“She is. Although a Gordon, and born in the Argyle Highlands, she was sent to school in London, where she was married at the age of seventeen, and has lived there ever since. Her husband is dead, and nothing that I have been able to say has yet tempted her to pay me a visit. She regards my home here as a wild, uninhabitable region, though she has never seen it, and besides, is getting too old and feeble to venture, as she says, on a long voyage. Certes she is not yet feeble in mind, whatever she may be in body; but she’s a good, amiable, affectionate woman, and I have no fault to find with her, except in regard to her severe conditions about Milly, and her anxiety to get her home again. After all, it is not to be wondered at, for Milly is her only child; and I am quite sure if I had not gone to London, and made all sorts of promises to be extremely careful of Milly and personally take her home again, she never would have let her come at all. See, there is one of Milly’s favourite views,” said the laird, pulling up, and pointing with his whip to the scene in front,

where a range of purple hills formed a fine background to the loch, with its foreground of tangle-covered stones; "she revels in depicting that sort of thing."

Barret, after expressing his thorough approval of the young girl's taste in the matter of scenery, asked if Milly's delicate health was the cause of her mother's anxiety.

"Delicate health!" exclaimed the laird. "Why, man, sylphlike though she appears, she has got the health of an Amazon. No, no, there's nothing wrong with my niece, save in the imagination of my sister. We will stop at this cottage for a few minutes. I want to see one of my men, who is not very well."

He pulled up at the door of a little stone hut by the roadside, which possessed only one small window and one chimney, the top of which consisted of an old cask, with the two ends knocked out. A bare-legged boy ran out of the hut to hold the horse.

"Is your brother better to-day?" asked the laird.

"No, sir; he's jist the same."

"Mind your head," said the laird, as he stooped to pass the low doorway, and led his friend into the hut.

The interior consisted of one extremely dirty room, in which the confined air was further vitiated by tobacco smoke and the fumes of whisky. One entire side of it was occupied by two box-beds, in one of which lay a brawny, broad-shouldered man, with fiery red hair and scarcely less fiery red eyes, which seemed to glare out of the dark den in which he lay.

"Well, Ivor, are ye not better to-day, man?"

There was a sternness in Mr. Gordon's query, which not only surprised but grieved his young companion; and the surprise was increased when the sick man replied in a surly tone,—

“Na, laird, I'm not better; an' what's more, I'll not be better till my heed's under the sod.”

“I'm afraid you are right, Ivor,” returned the laird, in a somewhat softer tone; “for when a man won't help himself, no one else can help him.”

“Help myself!” exclaimed the man, starting up on one elbow, and gazing fiercely from under his shaggy brows. “Help myself!” he repeated. And then, as if resolving suddenly to say no more, he sank down and laid his head on the pillow, with a short groan.

“Here, Ivor, is a bottle o' physic that my wife sends to ye,” said Mr. Gordon, pulling a pint bottle from his pocket, and handing it to the man, who clutched it eagerly, and was raising it to his mouth when his visitor arrested his hand.

“Hoot, man,” he said, with a short laugh, “it's not whisky! She bid me say ye were to take only half a glass at a time, every two hours.”

“Poor't oot, then, laird—poor't oot,” said the man, impatiently. “Ye'll fin' a glass i' the wundy.”

Fetching a wine-glass from the window Mr. Gordon half filled it with a liquid of a dark brown colour, which the sick man quaffed with almost fierce satisfaction, and then lay down with a sigh.

“It seems to have done ye good already, man,” said the laird, putting the bottle and glass on that con-

venient shelf—the window-sill. “I’ve no idea what the physic is, but my good wife seems to know, and that’s enough for me; and for you, too, I think.”

“Ay, she’s a good wumin. Thank her for me,” responded Ivor.

Remounting the dog-cart the old gentleman explained, as they drove along, that Ivor Donaldson’s illness was the result of intemperance.

“He is my gamekeeper,” said the laird; “and there is not a better or more trustworthy man in the island, when he is sober; but when he takes one of his drinking fits, he seems to lose all control over himself, and goes from bad to worse, till a fit of *delirium tremens* almost kills him. He usually goes for a good while after that without touching a drop, and at such times he is a most respectful, painstaking man, willing to take any amount of trouble to serve one, but when he breaks down he is as bad as—nay, even worse than—ever. My wife and I have done what we could for him, and have tried to get him to take the temperance pledge, but hitherto without avail. My wife has even gone the length of becoming a total abstainer, in order to have more influence over him; but I don’t quite see my way to do that myself.”

“Then *you* have not yet done all that you could for the man, though your wife has,” thought Barret; but he did not venture to say so.

At this point in the conversation they reached a place where the road left the shores of the loch and ascended into the hills. Being rather steep at its

lower end, they alighted and walked ; the laird pointing out, as they ascended, features in the landscape which he thought would interest his young guest.

“Yonder,” he said, pointing to a wood on the opposite side of the valley, “yonder is a good piece of cover for deer. The last time we had a drive there we got three, one o’ them a stag with very fine antlers. It was there that a young friend of mine, who was not much accustomed to sporting, shot a red cow in mistake for a deer ! The same friend knocked over five or six of my tame ducks, under the impression that they were wild ones, because he found them among the heather ! Are you fond of sport ? ”

“Not particularly,” answered Barret ; “that is, I am not personally much of a sportsman, though I have great enjoyment in going out with my sporting friends and watching their proceedings. My own tastes are rather scientific. I am a student of natural history—a botanist and geologist—though I lay no claim to extensive knowledge of science.”

“Ah ! my young friend, then you will find a powerful sympathiser in my niece Milly—that is, when the poor child gets well—for she is half mad on botany. Although only two weeks have passed since she came to us, she has almost filled her room with specimens of what she calls rare plants. I sometimes tease her by saying it is fortunate that bracken does not come under that head, else she’d pull it all up and leave no cover for the poor rabbits. She has also half filled several huge books with gummed-in specimens innumerable,

though I can't see that she does more than write their names below them."

"And that is no small advance in the science, let me tell you," returned Barret, who was stirred up to defend his co-scientist. "No one can succeed in anything who does not take the first steps, and undergo the drudgery manfully."

"Womanfully, in this case, my friend; but do not imagine that I underrate my little niece. My remark was to the effect that I do not see that she *does* more, though I have no manner of doubt that her pretty little head *thinks* a great deal more. Now we will get up here, as the road is more level for a bit. D'you see the group of alders down in the hollow yonder, where the little stream that runs through the valley takes a sudden bend? There's a deep pool there, where a good many sea-trout congregate. You shall try it soon—that is, if you care for fishing."

"Oh, yes, I like fishing," said Barret. "It is a quiet, contemplative kind of sport."

"Contemplative!" exclaimed the old gentleman with a laugh; "well, yes, it is a little. Sometimes you get down into the bed of the stream with considerable difficulty, and you have to contemplate the banks a long time, occasionally, before deciding as to which precipice is least likely to give you a broken neck. Yes, it is a contemplative sport. As to quiet, that depends very much on what your idea of quietude may be. Our burn descends for two or three miles in succession of leaps and bounds. If the roaring of

cataracts is quieting to you, there is no end of it down there. See, the pool that I speak of is partly visible now, with the waterfall above it. You see it?"

"Yes, I see it."

"We call it Mac's pool," continued the laird, driving on, "because it is a favourite pool of an old school companion of mine, named MacRummle, who is staying with us just now. He tumbles into it about once a week."

"Is that considered a necessary part of the process of fishing?" asked Barret.

"No, it may rather be regarded as an eccentric addition peculiar to MacRummle. The fact is, that my good friend is rather too old to fish now; but his spirit is still so juvenile, and his sporting instincts are so keen, that he is continually running into dangerous positions and getting into scrapes. Fortunately he is very punctual in returning to meals; so if he fails to appear at the right time, I send off one of my men to look for him. I have offered him a boy as an attendant, but he prefers to be alone."

"There seems to be some one down at the pool now," remarked Barret, looking back.

"No doubt it is MacRummle himself," said the laird, pulling up. "Ay, and he seems to be making signals to us."

"Shall I run down and see what he wants?" asked Barret.

"Do; you are active, and your legs are strong. It will do you good to scramble a little."

Leaping the ditch that skirted the road, the youth soon crossed the belt of furze and heather that lay between him and the river, about which he and his host had been conversing. Being unaccustomed to the nature of the Western Isles, he was a little surprised to find the country he had to cross extremely rugged and broken, and it taxed all the activity for which the laird had given him credit, as well as his strength of limb, to leap some of the peat-hags and water-courses that came in his way. He was too proud of his youthful vigour to pick his steps round them! Only once did he make a slip in his kangaroo-like bounds, but that slip landed him knee-deep in a bog of brown mud, out of which he dragged his legs with difficulty.

Gaining the bank of the river at last, he soon came up to the fisher, who was of sturdy build, though somewhat frail from age, and dressed in brown tweed garments, with a dirty white wideawake, the crown of which was richly decorated with casting-lines and hooks, ranging from small brown hackle to salmon-fly. But the striking thing about him was that his whole person was soaking wet. Water dripped from the pockets of his shooting coat, dribbled from the battered brim of his wideawake, and, flowing from his straightened locks, trickled off the end of his Roman nose.

“You have been in the water, I fear,” said Barret, in a tone of pity.

“And you have been in the mud, young man,” said the fisher, in a tone of good-humoured sarcasm.

The youth burst into a laugh at this, and the old fisherman's mouth expanded into a broad grin, which betrayed the fact that age had failed to damage his teeth, though it had played some havoc with his legs.

"These are what I style Highland boots," said the old man, pointing to the muddy legs.

"Indeed!" returned Barret. "Well, you see I have put them on at once, for I have only arrived a few hours since. My name is Barret. I believe I have the pleasure of addressing Mr. MacRummle?"

"You have that pleasure, Mr. Barret; and now, if you will do me the kindness to carry my rod and basket, I will lead you back to the dog-cart by a path which will not necessitate an additional pair of native boots! I would not have hailed you, but having tumbled into the river, as you see, I thought it would be more prudent to get driven home as quickly as possible."

"You have a good basket of fish, I see, or rather, feel," remarked Barret, as he followed the old man, who walked rather slowly, for his physical strength was not equal to his spirits.

"Ay, it is not so bad; but I lost the best one. Fishers always do, you know! He was a grilse, a six-pounder at the least, if he was an ounce, for I had him within an inch of my gaff when I overbalanced myself, and shot into the stream head foremost with such force, that I verily believe I drove him to the very bottom of the pool. Strange to say the rod was

not broken ; but when I scrambled ashore, I found that the grilse was gone !”

“How unfortunate ! You were not hurt, I hope ?”

“Not in the least. There was plenty of depth for a dive ; besides, I’m used to it.”

It became quite evident to John Barret that his new friend was “used to” a good many more things besides tumbling into the river, for as they went slowly along the winding footpath that led them through the peat-hags, MacRummle tripped over a variety of stumps, roots, and other excrescences which presented themselves in the track, and which on several occasions brought him to the ground. The old gentleman, however, had a fine facility in falling. Being slow in all his movements, he usually subsided rather than fell ; a result, perhaps, of laziness as well as of unwillingness to struggle against fate. His frequent staggerings, also, on the verge of dark peat holes, caused his companion many a shock of alarm and many a start forward to prevent a catastrophe, before they gained the high road. They reached it at last, however, rather breathless, but safe.

MacRummle’s speech, like his movements, was slow. His personal courage, considering the dangers he constantly and voluntarily encountered, was great.

“You’ve been in again, Mac, I see,” exclaimed the laird heartily, extending his hand to his old friend with the view of hauling him up on the seat beside him. “Mind the step. Now then !”

“Yes, I’ve been in, but the weather is warm! Stop, stop! Don’t pull quite so hard, Allan; mind my rheumatic shoulder. Give a shove behind, Mr. Barret—gently—there. Thankee.”

The old man sat down with something of a crash beside his friend. Barret handed him his rod, put the basket under his feet, and sprang up on the seat behind.

Returning at a swift pace by the road they had come, they soon reached Kinlossie, where the laird drove into the back yard, so as to deliver the still dripping MacRummle at the back door, and thus prevent his leaving a moist track from the front hall to his bedroom. Having got rid of him, and given the dog-cart in charge to the groom, Mr. Gordon led his young friend round to the front of the house.

“I see your friends have already arrived,” said the laird, pointing to the waggonette which stood in the yard. “No doubt we shall find them about somewhere.”

They turned the corner of the mansion as he spoke, and certainly did come on Barret’s friends, in circumstances, however, which seemed quite unaccountable at first sight, for there, in front of the open door, were not only Bob Mabberly, Giles Jackman, Skipper McPherson, James McGregor, Pat Quin, and Robin Tips, but also Mrs. Gordon, the two boy Gordons—named respectively, Eddie and Junkie—Duncan, the butler, and little Flora, with a black wooden doll in her arms, all standing in more or less awkward attitudes

motionless and staring straight before them as if petrified with surprise or some kindred feeling.

Barret looked at his host with a slight elevation of his eyebrows.

"Hush!" said the laird, softly, holding up a finger of caution. "My boy Archie is behind that laurel bush. He's photographing them!"

"That'll do," in a loud voice from Archie, disenchanted the party; and while the operator rushed off to his "dark closet," the laird hurried forward to be introduced to the new arrivals, and give them hospitable greeting.

That evening the host and his wife entertained their guests to a genuine Highland feast in the trophied hall, and at a somewhat later hour Duncan, the butler, and Elsie, the cook, assisted by Roderick, the groom, and Mary, the housemaid, held their share of high revelry in the kitchen, with Quin, Tips, and "Shames" McGregor.

"You have come to the right place for sport, gentlemen," said the laird, as he carved with vigour at a splendid haunch of venison. "In their seasons we have deer and grouse on the hills; rabbits, hares, partridges, and pheasants on the low grounds. What'll you have, Mr. Mabberly? My dear, what have you got there?"

"Pigeon pie," answered Mrs. Gordon.

"Mac, that will suit your taste, I know," cried the host with a laugh.

"Yes, it will," slowly returned MacRummle, whose

ruddy face and smooth bald head seemed to glow with satisfaction now that he had got into dry garments. "Yes, I'm almost as fond of pie as my old friend Robinson used to be. He was so fond of it that, strange though it may seem to you, gentlemen, he had a curious predilection for pie-bald horses."

"Come, now, Mac, don't begin upon your friend Robinson till after dinner."

"Has Archie's photography turned out well?" asked Mabberly at this point. "I do a little in that way myself, and am interested as to the result of his efforts to-day."

"We cannot know that before to-morrow, I fear," replied Mrs. Gordon.

"Did I hear you ask about Archie's work, Mabberly?" said the laird, interrupting. "Oh! it'll turn out well, I have no doubt. He does everything well. In fact, all the boys are smartish fellows; a little self-willed and noisy, perhaps, like all boys, but——"

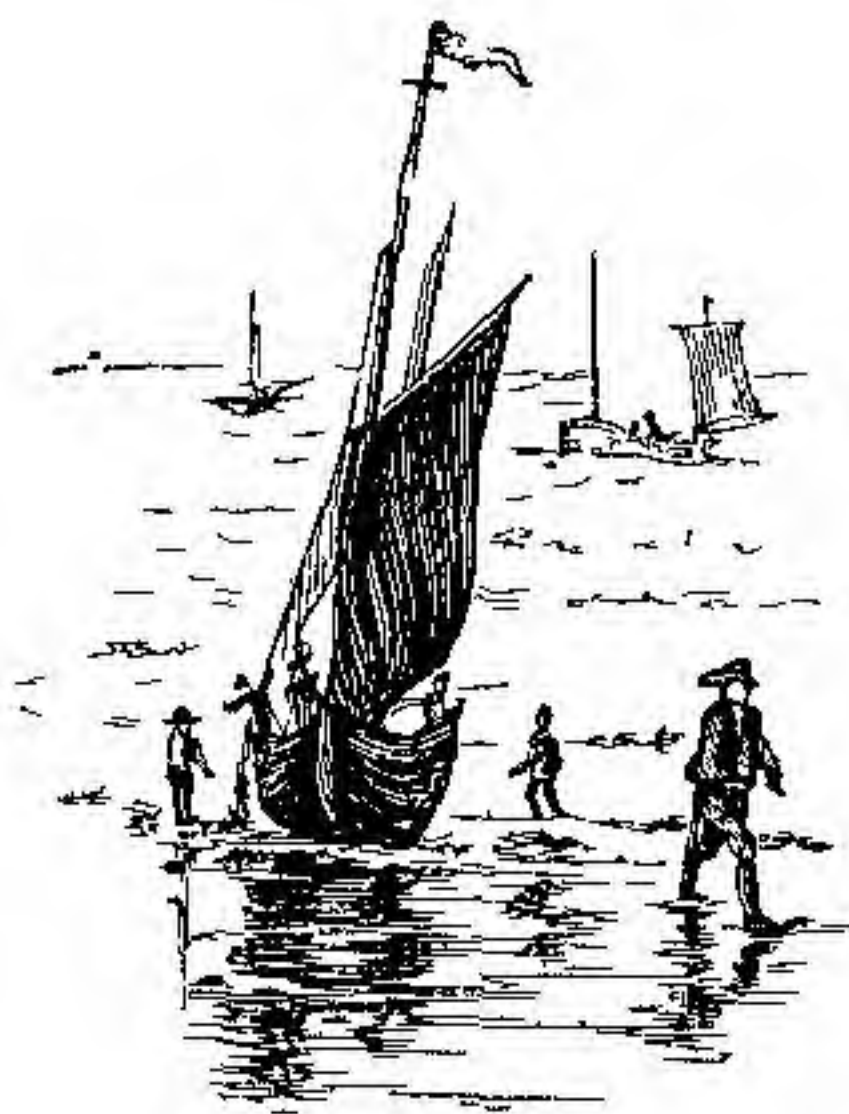
A tremendous crash in the room above, which was the nursery, caused the laird to drop his knife and fork and quickly leave the room, with a look of anxiety, for he was a tender-hearted, excitable man; while his quiet and delicate-looking wife sat still, with a look of serenity not unmingled with humour.

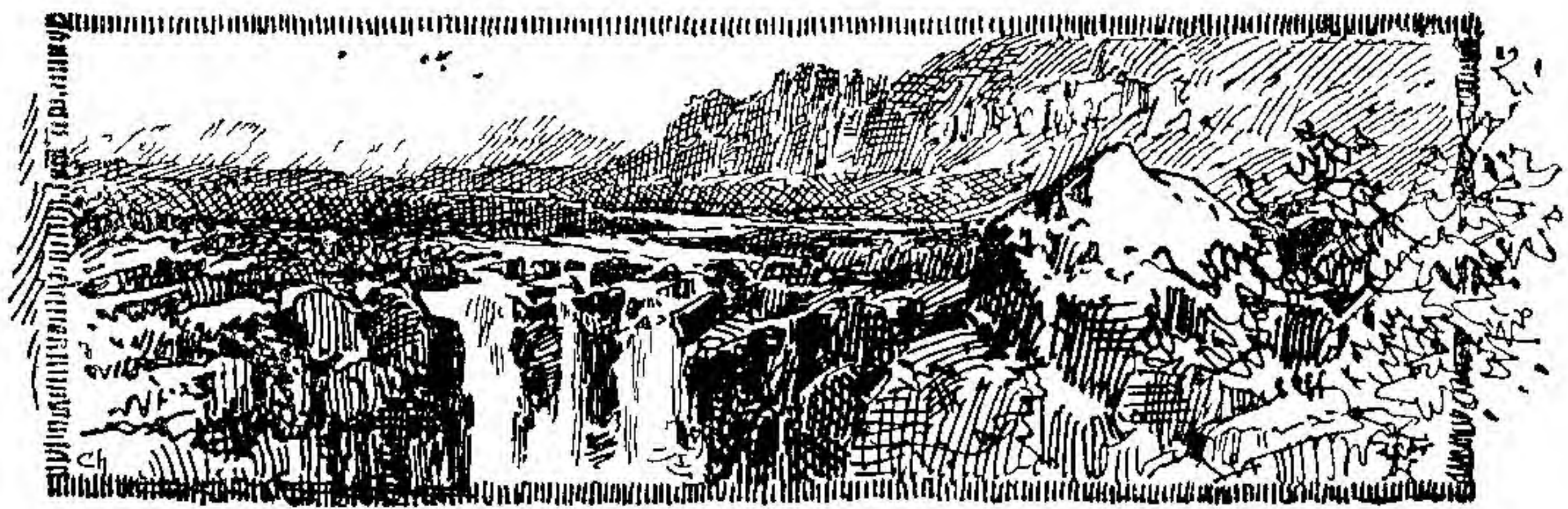
"Something overturned, I suppose," she remarked.

In a few minutes her husband returned with a bland smile.

"Yes," he said, resuming his knife and fork; "it was Junkie, as usual, fighting with Flo for the black

doll. No mischief would have followed, I daresay, but Archie and Eddie joined in the scrimmage, and between them they managed to upset the table. I found them wallowing in a sea of porridge and milk—that was all !”





CHAPTER V.

PLANS, PROSPECTS, AND A GREAT FIGHT.

THERE is something very enjoyable in awaking in a strange bedroom with a feeling of physical strength and abounding health about one, with a glorious, early sunbeam irradiating the room—especially if it does not shine upon one's face—with a window opposite, through which you can see a mountain rising through the morning mists, until its summit appears to claim kindred with the skies, and with the consciousness that work is over for a time, and recreation is the order of the day.

Some such thoughts and feelings caused John Barret to smile as he lay flat on his back, the morning after his arrival, with his hands under his head, surveying the low-roofed but cosy apartment which had been allotted to him in the mansion of Kinlossie. But the smile gave place to a grave, earnest expression as his eyes fell upon a framed card, on which was printed, in

scarlet and blue and gold, "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof."

"So it is," thought the youth: "and my power to enjoy it comes from the Lord—my health, my strength, myself. Yet how seldom do I thank Him for the mere fact of a happy existence. God forgive me!"

Although Barret thus condemned himself, we would not have it supposed that he had been a careless unbeliever. His temperament was grave (not by any means gloomy) by nature, and a Christian mother's love and teaching had, before her early death, deepened his religious impressions.

He was beginning to wonder whether it was Mrs Gordon who had hung the text there, and whether it had been executed by Milly Moss, when the "get up" gong sent forth a sonorous peal, causing him to bound out of bed. The act brought before his eyes another bed—a small one—in a corner of the room, reminding him of what he had forgotten, that, the house being full to overflow by the recent accession of visitors, little Joseph, better known as Junkie, shared the room with him.

Junkie was at the moment sleeping soundly, after the manner of the hedgehog—that is, curled up in the form of a ball. It was plain that neither dressing gongs nor breakfast bells had any effect upon him, for he lay still in motionless slumber.

"Hallo! Junkie, did you hear the gong?" said Barret, pushing the boy gently.

But Junkie answered not, and he had to push him

three or four times gently, and twice roughly, before he could awaken the youngster. Uncoiling himself and turning on the other side, Junkie heaved a deep sigh, and murmured,—

“Leave m’ ’lone.”

“Junkie! Junkie! you’ll be late for breakfast,” shouted Barret in his ear.

“Don’—wan’—any—br’kf’st,” murmured the boy. “Leave m’ ’lone, I say—or ’ll wallop you!”

A laugh from Barret, and a still severer shake, roused the boy so far as to make him sit up and stare about him with almost supernatural solemnity. Then he yawned, rubbed his eyes, and smiled faintly.

“Oh! it’s *you*, is it?” he said. “I thought it was Eddy, and——”

Another yawn checked his utterance. Then he suddenly jumped up, and began to haul on his clothes with surprising rapidity. It was evident that Junkie had a will of his own, and was accustomed to exert it on all occasions. He continued to dress, wash himself, brush his hair and his teeth, without speaking, and with such vigour that he soon distanced his companion in the race. True, he did not do everything thoroughly. He did not render his little hands immaculately clean. He did not remember that the secret places behind his ears required to be particularly attended to, and, in brushing operations, he totally forgot that he was possessed of back-hair. Indeed, it is just possible that he disbelieved that fact, for he neglected it entirely, insomuch that when he had completed the operation

to his own entire satisfaction, several stiff and independent locks pointed straight to the sky, and two or three to the horizon.

“That’s a pretty text on the wall, Junkie,” observed Barret, while the youngster was busy with the comb.

“Yes, it’s pretty.”

Barret wished to draw the boy out, but, like a tough piece of india-rubber, he refused to be drawn out.

“It is beautifully painted. Who did it?” asked the youth, making another attempt.

He had accidentally touched the right chord this time. It vibrated at once. Junkie looked up with sparkling eyes, and said that Milly did it.

“She does everything beautifully,” he added, as he brushed away at his forelock—a remarkably obstinate forelock, considering that it was the most highly favoured lock of his head.

“You like Milly, I see,” said his friend.

“Of course I do. Everybody does.”

“Indeed! Why does everybody like her so much?”

“’Cause she’s so nice,” said Junkie, dropping his brush on the floor—not accidentally, but as the easiest way of getting rid of it. “And she sometimes says, that I’m good.”

“I’m glad to hear that, my boy, for if Milly says so it must be true.”

“No, it’s *not* true,” returned the boy promptly, as he fastened his necktie in a complex knot, and thrust his arm through the wrong hole of his little vest. “Milly is mistaken, that’s all. But I like her to say

it, all the same. It feels jolly. But I'm bad—*awful* bad! Everybody says so. Father says so, an' he must be right, you know, for he says he knows everything. Besides, I *feel* it, an' I know it, an' I don't care!"

Having given vent to this reckless statement, and wriggled into his jacket—the collar of which he left half down and half up—Junkie suddenly plumped down on his knees, laid his head on his bed, and remained perfectly still for the space of about one quarter of a minute. Then, jumping up with the pleased expression of one who felt that he had done his duty, he was about to rush from the room, when Barret stopped him.

"I'm glad to see that you say your prayers, at all events," he said.

"But I wouldn't say them if it wasn't for Milly," returned the urchin. "I do it to please her. An' I wash an' brush myself, an' all that, just 'cause she likes me to do it. I'd neither wash, nor pray, nor brush, nor anything, if it wasn't to please Milly—and mother," he added, after a moment's reflection. "I like *them*, an' I don't care a button for anybody else."

"What! for nobody else at all?"

"Well, yes, I forgot—I like Ivor, too."

"Is that the sick gamekeeper, Junkie?"

"Sick! no; he's the drunken keeper. Drunken Ivor, we call him—not to his face, you know. Wouldn't we catch it if we did that! But I'm fond of drunken Ivor, an' he's fond of me. He takes me out sometimes when he goes to shoot rabbits and fish. Sometimes

he's awful fierce, but he's never fierce to his old mother that lives in the hut close behind his—'cept when he's drunk. D'ee know"—the boy lowered his voice at this point and looked solemn—"he very nearly killed his mother once, when he was drunk, you know, an' when he came sober he cried—oh, just as our Flo cries when she's bin whipped."

At this point the breakfast-bell pealed forth with, so to speak, a species of clamorous enthusiasm by no means unusual in Scottish country mansions, as if it knew that there was spread out a breakfast worth ringing for. At the first sound of it, Junkie burst from the room, left the door wide open, clattered along the passage, singing, yelling vociferously as he went—and trundled downstairs like a retiring thunderstorm.

The arrangements for the day at Kinlossie were usually fixed at the breakfast hour, if they had not been settled the night before. There was, therefore, a good deal to consult about during the progress of the meal.

"You see, gentlemen," said the host, when the demands of nature were partially satisfied, "friends who come to stay with me are expected to select their occupations or amusements for the day as fancy or taste may lead them. My house is 'liberty hall.' Sometimes we go together on the hills after grouse, at other times after red deer. When the rivers are in order, we take our rods and break up into parties. When weather and wind are suitable, some go boating and sea-fishing. Others go sketching or botanising. If

the weather should become wet, you will find a library next to this room, a billiard-table in the west wing, and a smoking-room—which is also a rod and gun-room—in the back premises. We cannot take the men from their work to-day, so that a deer-drive is not possible, but that can be done any day. So, gentlemen, think over it, and make your choice.”

“How is Milly this morning?” asked MacRummle, who came down late to breakfast, as he always did, and consequently missed morning prayers.

“Better, much better than we could have expected. Of course the arm is inflamed and very painful, but not broken, which is almost a miracle, considering the height from which she fell. But for you, Mr. Barret, she might have lain there for hours before we found her, and the consequences might have been very serious. As it is, the doctor says she will probably be able to leave her room in a few days.”

“Come, now, Mac,” continued the host, “we have been talking over plans for the day. What do you intend to do?”

“Try the river,” said the old gentleman, with quiet decision, as he slowly helped himself to the ham and egg that chanced to be in front of him. “There’s a three-pounder, if not a four, which rose in the middle pool yesterday, and I feel sure of him to-day.”

“Why, Mr. MacRummle,” said Mrs. Gordon smilingly, “you have seen that three- or four-pounder every day for a month past.”

“I have, Mrs. Gordon; and I hope to see him every

day for a month to come, if I don't catch him to-day !”

“ Whatever you do, Mac, don't dive for him,” said the laird ; “ else we will some day have to fish yourself out of the middle pool. Have another cut of salmon, Mr. Mabberly. In what direction do your tastes point ? ”

“ I feel inclined to make a lazy day of it and go out with your son Archie,” said Mabberly, “ to look at the best views for photographing. I had intended to photograph a good deal among the Western Isles, this summer ; but my apparatus now lies, with the yacht, at the bottom of the sea.”

“ Yes, in company with my sixteen-shooter rifle,” said Giles Jackman, with a rueful countenance.

“ Well, gentlemen, I cannot indeed offer you much comfort as regards your losses, for the sea keeps a powerful hold of its possessions ; but you will find my boy's camera a fairly good one, and there are plenty of dry plates. It so happens, also, that I have a new repeating rifle in the house, which has not yet been used ; so, in the meantime, at all events, neither of you will suffer much from your misfortunes.”

It was finally arranged, before breakfast was over, that MacRummle was to go off alone to his usual and favourite burn ; that Jackman and Quin, under the guidance of Junkie, should try the river for salmon and sea-trout ; that Barret, with ex-Skipper McPherson, Shames McGregor, Robin Tips, Eddy Gordon, the laird's second son—a boy of twelve—and Ivor, the

keeper—whose recoveries were as rapid as his relapses were sudden—should all go off in the boat to try the sea-fishing; and that Bob Mabberly, with Archie, should go photographing up one of the most picturesque of the glens, conducted by the laird himself.

As it stands to reason that we cannot accompany all of these parties, we elect to follow Giles Jackman, Quin, and Junkie up the river.

This expedition involved a preliminary walk of four miles, which they all preferred to being driven to the scene of action in a dog-cart.

Junkie was a little fellow for his age, but remarkably intelligent, active, bright and strong. From remarks made by various members of the Gordon family and their domestics, both Jackman and his servant had been led to the conclusion that the boy was the very impersonation of mischief, and were more or less on the look-out for displays of his propensity; but Junkie walked demurely by their side, asking and replying to questions with the sobriety of an elderly man, and without the slightest indication of the latent internal fires with which he was credited.

The truth is, that Junkie possessed a nature that was tightly strung and vibrated like an *Æolian* harp to the lightest breath of influence. He resembled, somewhat, a pot of milk on a very hot fire, rather apt to boil over with a rush; nevertheless, he possessed the power to restrain himself in a simmering condition for a considerable length of time. The fact that he was fairly out for the day with two strangers, to whom

he was to show the pools where salmon and sea-trout lay, was a prospect so charming that he was quite content to simmer.

“D’ee know how to fish for salmon?” he asked, looking gravely up in Jackman’s face, after they had proceeded a considerable distance.

“Oh, yes, Junkie; I know how to do it. I used to fish for salmon before I went to India.”

“Isn’t that the place where they shoot lions and tigers and—and g’rillas?”

“Well, not exactly lions and gorillas, my boy; but there are plenty of baboons and monkeys there, and lots of tigers.”

“Have you shot them?” asked Junkie, with a look of keen interest.

“Yes; many of them.”

“Did you ever turn a tiger outside in?”

Jackman replied, with a laugh, that he had never performed that curious operation on anything but socks—that, indeed, he had never heard of such a thing being done.

“I knew it was a cracker,” said Junkie.

“What d’ you mean by a cracker, my boy?” inquired Jackman.

“A lie,” said Junkie, promptly.

“And who told the cracker?”

“Ivor. He tells me a great, great many stories.”

“D’ you mean Ivor Donaldson, the keeper?”

“Yes; he tells me plenty of stories, but some of them are crackers. He said that once upon a time

a man was walkin' through the jungle—that's what they call the bushes, you know, in India—an' he met a great big tiger, which glared at him with its great eyes, and gave a tremendous roar, and sprang upon him. The man was brave and strong. He held out his right arm straight, so that when the tiger came upon him his arm went into its open mouth and right down its throat, and his hand caught hold of something. It was the inside end of the tiger's tail! The man gave an *awful* pull, and the tiger came inside out at once with a *tremendous* crack!"

"Sure, and that *was* a cracker!" remarked Quin, who had been listening to the boy's prattle with an *amused* expression, as they trudged along.

"Nevertheless, it may not be fair to call it a lie, Junkie," said Jackman. "Did Ivor say it was true?"

"No. When I asked if it was, he only laughed, and said he had once read of the same thing being done to a walrus, but he didn't believe it."

"Just so, Junkie. He meant you to understand the story of the tiger as he did the story of the walrus—as a sort of fairy tale, you know."

"How could he mean that," demanded Junkie, "when he said it was a *tiger's* tail—not a *fairy's* at all?"

Jackman glanced at Quin, and suppressed a laugh. Quin returned the glance, and expressed a smile.

"Better luck next time," murmured the servant.

"Did you ever see walruses?" asked Junkie, whose

active mind was prone to jump from one subject to another.

“No, never; but I have seen elephants, which are a great deal bigger than walruses,” returned Jackman; “and I have shot them, too. I will tell you some stories about them one of these days—not ‘crackers,’ but true ones.”

“That’ll be nice! Now, we’re close to the sea-pool; but the tide’s too far in to fish that just now, so we’ll go up to the next one, if you like.”

“By all means, my boy. You know the river, and we don’t, so we put ourselves entirely under your guidance and orders,” replied Jackman.

By this time they had reached the river at the upper end of the loch. It ran in a winding course through a level plain which extended to the base of the encircling hills. The pool next the sea being unfishable, as we have said, owing to the state of the tide, Junkie conducted his companions high up the stream by a footpath. And a proud urchin he was, in his grey kilt and hose, with his glengarry cocked a little on one side of his curly head, as he strode before them with all the self-reliance of a Highland chieftain.

In a few minutes they came to the first practicable pool—a wide, rippling, oily, deep hole, caused by a bend in the stream, the appearance of which—suggestive of silvery scales—was well calculated to arouse sanguine hopes in a salmon fisher.

Here Quin proceeded to put together the pieces of

his master's rod, while Jackman, opening a portly fishing-book, selected a casting line and fly.

"Have you been in India, too?" asked Junkie of Quin, as he watched their proceedings with keen interest.

"Sure, an' I have—leastways if it wasn't dhreamin' I've bin there."

"An' have *you* killed lions, and tigers, and elephants?"

"Well, not exactly, me boy, but it's meself as used to stand by an' howld the spare guns whin the masther was killin' them."

"Wasn't you frightened?"

"Niver a taste. Och! thriflin' craters like them niver cost me a night's rest, which is more than I can say of the rats in Kinlossie, anyhow."

A little shriek of laughter burst from Junkie on hearing this.

"What are ye laughin' at, honey?" asked Quin.

"At you not bein' able to sleep for the rats!" returned the boy. "It's the way with everybody who comes to stay with us, at first, but they get used to it at last."

"Are the rats then so numerous?" asked Jackman.

"Swarmin', all over! Haven't you heard them yet?"

"Well, yes, I heard them scampering soon after I went to bed, but I thought it was kittens at play in the room overhead, and soon went to sleep. But they don't come into the rooms, do they?"

"Oh, no—I only wish they would! Wouldn't we have a jolly hunt if they did? But they scuttle about

the walls inside, and between the ceilings and the floors. And you can't frighten them. The only thing that scared them once was the bag-pipes. An old piper came to the house one day and played a great deal, and we heard nothing more of the rats for two or three weeks after that."

"Sensible bastes," remarked Quin, handing the rod to his master; "an' a sign, too, that they've got some notion o' music."

"Why, Quin, I thought you had bag-pipes in Ireland," said Jackman, as he fastened a large fly to his line.

"An' that's what we have, sor; but the Irish pipes are soft, mellow, gentle things—like the Irish girls—not like them big Scotch bellows that screech for all the world like a thousand unwillin' pigs bein' forced to go to markit."

"True, Quin; there's something in that. Now then, both of you stand close to me—a little behind—so; it's the safest place if you don't want to be hooked, and be ready with the gaff, Junkie," said the fisher, as he turned a critical eye on the water and made a fine cast over what he deemed the most likely part of the pool.

"Father never rose a fish there," said Junkie, with a demure look.

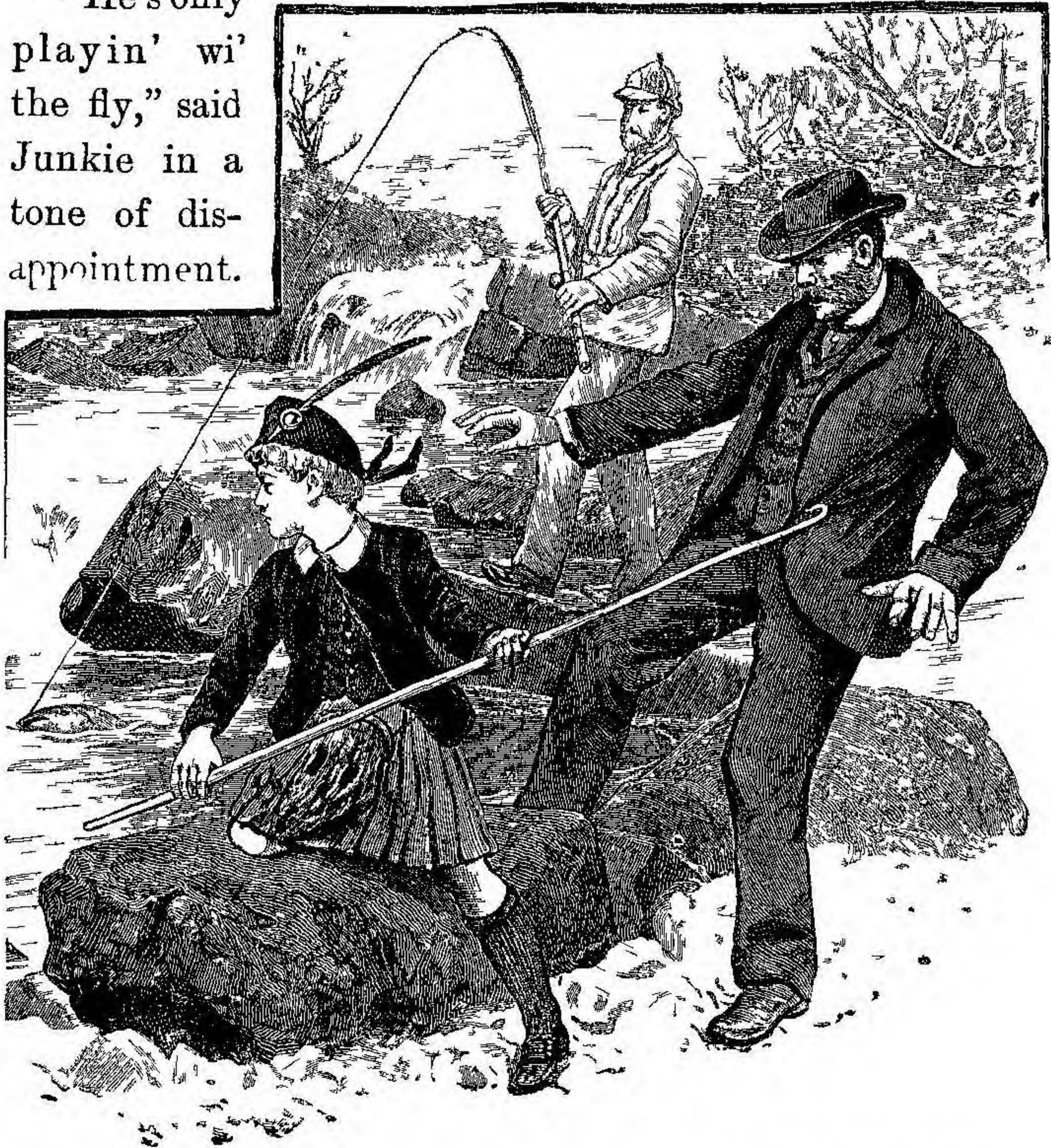
The fisher paid no attention to the remark, but continued to cast a little lower down stream each time.

"You're gettin' near the bit now," said Junkie, in the tone of one whose expectations are awakened.

"Th—there! That's him!"

“Ay, and a good one, too,” exclaimed Jackman, as a fan-like tail disappeared with a heavy splash. Again the fisher cast, with the same result.

“He’s only playin’ wi’ the fly,” said Junkie in a tone of disappointment.



“‘HOORAY!’ YELLED JUNKIE, AS HE FLOURISHED THE BIG HOOK ROUND HIS HEAD, AND GAFFED QUIN BY HIS COAT.” [p. 98.

“That’s often the way—no!—th—there! Got m!”

The rod bent like I hoop at the moment; the reel

spun round to its own merry music, as the line flew out, and the fish finished its first wild rush with a leap of three feet into the air.

“Hooray!” yelled Junkie, now fairly aflame, as he jumped like the fish, flourished the big hook round his head, and gaffed Quin by the lappet of his coat!

“Have a care, you spalpeen,” shouted the Irishman, grasping the excited youngster by the collar and disengaging himself from the hook. “Sure it might have been me nose as well as me coat, an’ a purty objec’ that would have made me!”

Junkie heeded not. When released he ran toward Jackman who was struggling skilfully with the fish.

“Don’t let him take you down the rapid,” he shouted. “There’s no good place for landin’ him there. Hold on, an’ bring ’im up if you can. Hi!”

This last exclamation was caused by another rush of the fish. Jackman had wound up his line as far as possible, and was in hopes of inducing the salmon to ascend the stream, for he had run perilously near to the head of the rapid against which the boy had just warned him. But to this the fish objected, and, finding that the fisher was obstinate, had, as we have said, made a sudden rush across the pool, causing the reel to spin furiously as the line ran out, and finishing off with another splendid jump.

“A few more bursts like that will soon exhaust him,” said Jackman, as he wound in the line again and drew the fish steadily towards him.

“Yes, but *don't* let him go down,” said the boy earnestly.

It seemed almost as if the creature had heard the warning, for it turned at the moment and made a straight rush for the head of the rapid.

When a large salmon does this it is absolutely impossible to stop him. Only two courses are open to the fisher—either to hold on and let him break the tackle; or follow him as fast as possible. The former alternative, we need hardly say, is only adopted when following is impracticable or involves serious danger. In the present case it was neither impossible nor dangerous, but it was difficult; and the way in which Giles Jackman went after that fish, staggering among pebbles, leaping obstructions, crashing through bushes and bounding over boulders, causing Quin to hold his sides with laughter, and little Junkie to stand transfixed and staring with admiration, was indescribable.

For Junkie had only seen his old father in such circumstances, and sometimes the heavy, rather clumsy, though powerful Ivor Donaldson. He had not till that day seen—much less imagined—what were the capacities of an Indian “Woods and Forester” of athletic build, superb training, and fresh from his native jungles!

“I say! *what* a jumper he is!” exclaimed Junkie, recovering presence of mind and dashing after him.

The rapid was a short though rough one. The chief danger was that the line might be cut among the foam-covered rocks, or that the hook, if not firmly

fixed, might tear itself away; also that the fisher might fall, which would probably be fatal to rod or line, to say nothing of elbows and shins.

But Jackman came triumphantly out of it all. The salmon shot into the pool below the rapid, and turned into the eddy to rest. The fisher, at the same moment, bounded on to a strip of sand there—*minus* only hat and wind—and proceeded to reel in the line for the next burst.

But another burst did not occur, for the fish was by that time pretty well exhausted, and took to what is styled sulking; that is, lying at the bottom of a hole with its nose, probably, under a stone. While in this position a fish may recover strength to renew the battle. It is therefore advisable, if possible, to drive him or haul him out of his refuge by all or any means. A small fish may be hauled out if the tackle be strong, but this method is not possible with a heavy one such as that which Jackman had hooked.

“What’s to be done now, Junkie?” he said, after one or two vain efforts to move the fish.

“Bomb stones at him,” said the urchin, without a moment’s hesitation.

“Bomb away then, my boy!”

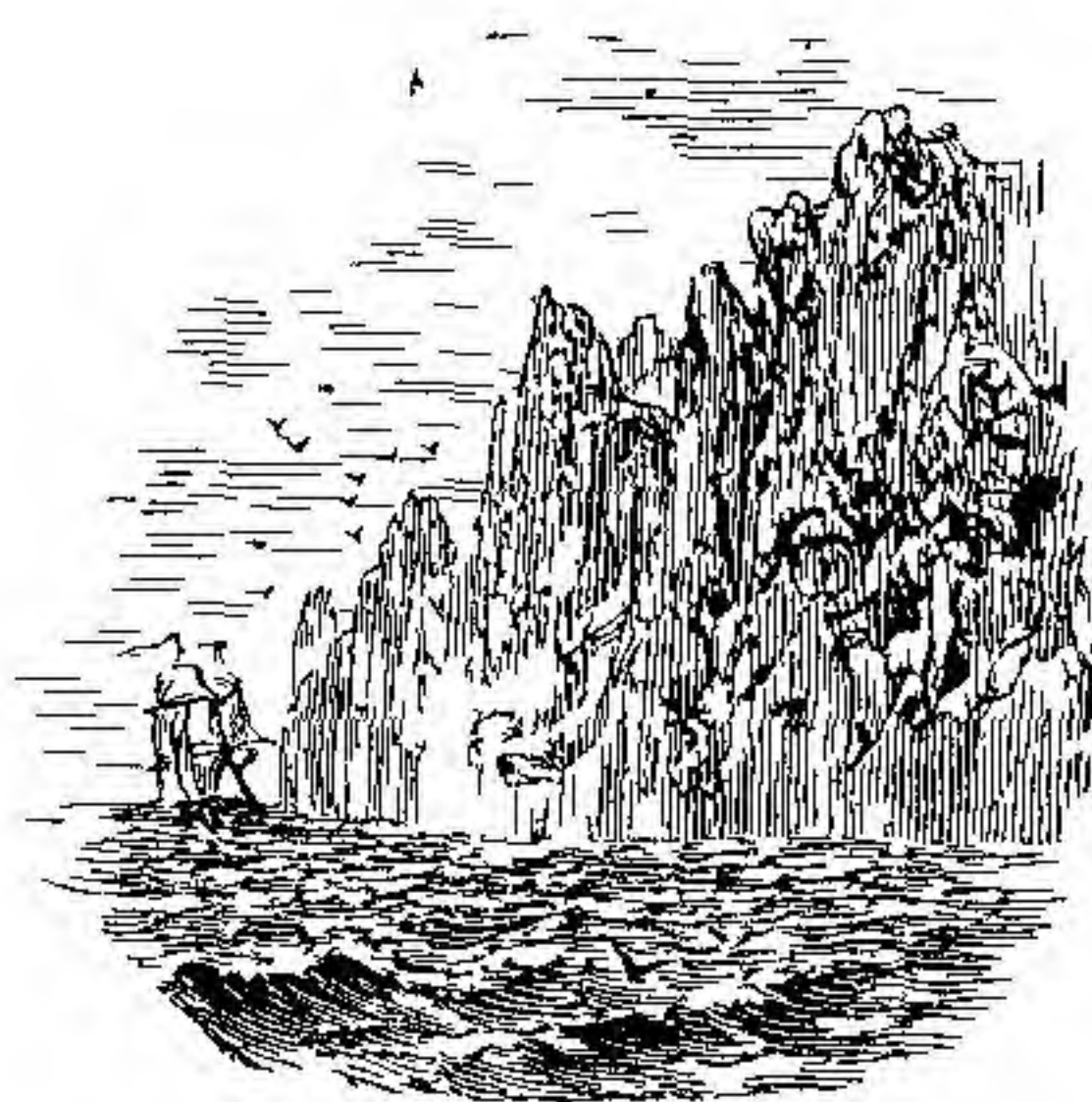
Junkie at once sent several large stones whizzing into the pool. The result was that the salmon made another dash for life, but gave in almost immediately, and came to the surface on its side. The battle is usually about ended when this takes place, though not invariably so, for lively fish sometimes recover

sufficiently to make a final effort. In this case, however, it was the close of the fight. Slowly and carefully the fisher drew the fish towards the shelving bank, where Junkie stood ready with the gaff. Another moment and the boy bounded into the water, stuck the hook into the salmon's shoulder, and laid it like a bar of glittering silver on the bank.

"A twenty-pounder," said Junkie, with critical gravity.

"Twinty an' three-quarters," said Quin, as he weighed it.

"And a good job, too," returned the practical urchin; "for I heard mother say we'd have no fish for dinner to-morrow if somebody didn't catch something."





CHAPTER VI.

DANGEROUS STUDIES, PECULIAR ART, AND SPLENDID FISHING.

THERE was a glass conservatory in one corner of the garden at Kinlossie House, to which the laird was wont to retire regularly for the enjoyment of a pipe every morning after breakfast. In this retreat, which was rich in hot-house plants, he was frequently joined by one or more of the members of his family, and sometimes by the friends who chanced to be staying with him. Thither John Barret got into the way of going—partly for the sake of a chat with the old man, of whom he soon became very fond, and partly for the sake of the plants, in which he was scientifically interested. botany being, as Mabberly said, his peculiar weakness.

One morning—and a gloriously bright morning it was, such as induces one to thank God for the gift of sunshine and the capacity of enjoying it—John Barret sauntered down to the garden, after breakfast, to have

a quiet chat with his host. He had decided to remain at home that morning for the purpose of writing a letter or two, intending in the afternoon to follow up some of his companions, who had gone off to the hills.

Entering the conservatory, he found that the laird was not there; but, in his usual rustic chair, there sat a beautiful girl, sound asleep, with her fair cheek resting on her little hand, and her nut-brown hair straggling luxuriantly over her shoulders.

Barret was spell-bound. He could not move for a few seconds. Surprise may have had something to do with the sudden paralysis of his powers. It may have been curiosity, possibly admiration, certainly some sort of sensation that he could neither describe nor account for. He knew at a glance who the girl was, though he had not seen her since the day of her accident. Even if he had been so obtuse as not to know, the arm in a sling would have revealed that it was Milly Moss who slumbered there; yet he found it hard to believe that the neat little woman, with the lovely, benignant countenance before him was in very truth the dishevelled, dusty, scratched, and blood-sprinkled being whom he had carried for several miles over the heather a short time before.

As we have said, Barret stood immovable, not knowing very well what to do. Then it occurred to him that it was scarcely gallant or fair thus to take advantage of a sleeping beauty. Staring at her was bad enough, but to awake her would be still worse; so he turned slowly about, as a cat turns when afraid of

being pounced on by a glaring adversary. He would retire on tip-toe as softly as possible, so as not to disturb her. In carrying out this considerate intention, he swept a flowerpot off its stand, which fell with a mighty crash upon the stone floor.

The poor youth clasped his hands, and glanced back over his shoulder in horror. The startled Milly was gazing at him with mingled surprise and alarm, which changed, however, into a flush and a look of restrained laughter—as she began to understand the situation.

“Never mind, Mr. Barret,” she said, rising, and coming forward with a gracious manner. “It is only one of the commonest plants we have. There are plenty more of them. You came, I suppose, in search of my uncle? Excuse my left hand; the right, as you see, is not yet fit for duty.”

“I did indeed come here in search of Mr. Gordon,” said Barret, recovering himself; “but permit me to lead you back to the chair; your strength has not quite returned yet, I see.”

He was right. Although Milly had recovered much more rapidly than the doctor had expected, she could not stand much excitement, and the shock given by the breaking flowerpot, coupled, perhaps, with the unexpected meeting with the man who had rescued her from what might well have caused her death, somewhat overcame her.

“Excuse me,” she said, with a fluttering sigh, as she sank down into the rustic chair, “I do feel rather faint. It does seem so strange! I—I suppose it is because I

have had no experience of anything but robust health all my life till now. There—I feel better. Will you kindly fetch me a glass of water? You will find a cistern with a tumbler beside it outside.”

The youth hurried out, and, on returning with the glass, found that the deadly pallor of the girl’s face had passed away, and was replaced by a tint that might have made the blush rose envious.

“You must understand,” said Milly, setting down the glass, while Barret seated himself on a vacant flowerpot-stand beside her, “that this conservatory is a favourite haunt of mine, to which, before my accident, I have resorted every morning since I came here, in order to sit with Uncle Allan. The doctor thought me so much better this morning that he gave me leave to recommence my visits. This is why I came; but I had totally forgotten that uncle had arranged to go out with the shooting party to-day, so I sat down to enjoy my favourite plants, and paid them the poor compliment of falling asleep, owing to weakness, I suppose. But how does it happen, Mr. Barret, that you have been left behind? They gave me to understand that you are a keen sportsman.”

“They misled you, then, for I am but a poor sportsman, and by no means enthusiastic. Indeed, whether I go out with rod or gun, I usually convert the expedition into a search for plants.”

“Oh, then, you are fond of botany!” exclaimed the girl, with a flush of pleasure and awakened interest. “I am so glad of that, because—because——”

“Well, why do you hesitate, Miss Moss?” asked Barret, with a surprised look and a smile.

“Well, I don’t quite like to lay bare my selfishness; but the truth is, there are some rare plants in terribly inaccessible places, which can only be reached by creatures in male attire. In fact, I was trying to secure one of these on the Eagle Cliff when I fell, and was so nearly killed at the time you rescued me.”

“Pray don’t give the little service I rendered so dignified a name as ‘rescue.’ But it rejoices me to know that I can be of further service to you—all the more that you are now so helpless; for if you found climbing the precipices difficult before, you will find it impossible now with your injured arm. By the way, I was very glad to find that I had been mistaken in thinking that your arm was broken. Has it given you much pain?”

“Yes, a good deal; but I am very, very thankful it was no worse. And now I must show you some of the plants I have been trying to bring up since I came here,” said Milly, with animation. “Of course, I cannot walk about to show them to you, so I will point them out, and ask you to fetch the pots—that is, if you have nothing better to do, and won’t be bored.”

Barret protested earnestly that he had nothing—*could* have nothing—better to do, and that even if he had he wouldn’t do it. As for being bored, the idea of such a state of mind being possible in the circumstances was ridiculous.

Milly was rejoiced. Here she had unexpectedly

found a friend to sympathise with her intelligently. Her uncle, she was well aware, sympathised with her heartily, but not intelligently; for his knowledge of botany, he told her frankly, was inferior to that of a tom-cat, and he was capable of little more in that line than to distinguish the difference between a cabbage and a potato.

At it, therefore, the two young people went with real enthusiasm—we might almost say with red-hot enthusiasm—for botany was only a superstructure, so to speak, love being the foundation of the whole affair.

But let not the reader jump to hasty conclusions. Barret and Milly, being young and inexperienced, were absolutely ignorant at that time of the true state of matters. Both were earnest and straightforward—both were ardently fond of botany, and neither, up to that period, had known what it was to fall in love. What more natural, then, than that they should attribute their condition to botany? There is, indeed, a sense in which their idea was correct, for sympathy is one of the most precious seeds with which poor humanity is entrusted, and did not botany enable these two to unite in planting that seed, and is not sympathy the germ of full-blown love? If so, may they not be said to have fallen in love botanically? We make no assertion in regard to this. We merely, and modestly, put the question, leaving it to the intelligent reader to supply the answer—an exceedingly convenient mode of procedure when one is not quite sure of the answer one's self.

To return. Having got "at it," Barret and Milly continued at it for several hours, during which period they either forgot, or did not care to remember, the flight of time. They also contrived, during that time, to examine, discuss, and comment upon, a prodigious number of plants, all of which, being in pots or boxes, were conveyed by the youth to the empty stand at the side of the fair invalid. The minute examination with a magnifying glass of corolla, and stamen, and calyx, etc., rendered it necessary, of course, that these inquiries into the mysteries of Nature should bring the two heads pretty close together; one consequence being that the seed-plant of sympathy was "forced" a good deal, and developed somewhat after the fashion of those plants which Hindoo jugglers cause magically to sprout, blossom, and bloom before the very eyes of astonished beholders—with this difference, however, that whereas the development of the jugglers is deceptive as well as quick, that of our botanists was genuine and natural, though rapid.

The clang of the luncheon gong was the first thing that brought them to their senses.

"Surely there must be some mistake! Junkie must be playing with—no, it is indeed one o'clock," exclaimed Milly, consulting in unbelief a watch so small that it seemed like cruelty to expect it to go at all, much less to go correctly.

As she spoke, the door of the conservatory opened, and Mrs. Gordon appeared with affected indignation on her usually mild countenance.

“You naughty child!” she exclaimed, hurrying forward. “Did I not warn you to stay no longer than an hour? and here you are, flushed, and no doubt feverish, in consequence of staying the whole forenoon. Take my arm, and come away directly.”

“I pray you, Mrs. Gordon, to lay the blame on my shoulders,” said Barret. “I fear it was my encouraging Miss Moss to talk of her favourite study that induced her to remain.”

“I would be only too glad to lay the blame on your shoulders if I could lay Milly’s weakness there too,” returned the lady. “It is quite evident that you would never do for a nurse. Strong men like you have not sympathy enough to put yourself in the place of invalids, and think how they feel. I would scold you severely, sir, if you were not my guest. As it is, I will forgive you if you promise me not to mention the subject of botany in the presence of my niece for a week to come.”

“The condition is hard,” said Barret, with a laugh; “but I promise—that is, if Miss Moss does not force the subject on me.”

“I promise that, Mr. Barret; but I also attach a condition.”

“Which is——?”

“That you go to Eagle Cliff some day this week, and find for me a particular plant for which I have sought for a long time in vain, but which I am told is to be found there.”

“Most willingly. Nothing could give me greater

pleasure," returned the youth, with an air of such eager enthusiasm that he felt constrained to add,—
"you see, the acquisition of new and rare plants has been a sort of passion with me for many years, and I am quite delighted to find that there is a possibility of not only gratifying it here, but of being able at the same time to contribute to your happiness."

They reached the house as he made this gallant speech, and Milly went straight to her room.

The only members of the household who sat down to luncheon that day were Mrs. Gordon, Archie, the enthusiastic photographer, and Flo, with her black doll; and the only guest, besides Barret, was McPherson, the skipper of the lost yacht. The rest were all out rambling by mountain, loch, or stream.

"Milly won't appear again to-day," said the hostess, as she sat down. "I knew that she had overdone it. The shock to her system has been far too severe to admit of botanical discussions."

Barret professed himself overwhelmed with a sense of guilt, and promised to avoid the dangerous subject in future.

"Mother," exclaimed Flo, who was a good but irrepressible child, "what d'ee t'ink? Archie have pofografft dolly, an' she's as like as—as—two peas. Isn't she, Archie?"

"Quite as like as that, F'lo," replied Archie, with a laugh; "liker, if anything."

"By the way, how did you get on with your photographing yesterday afternoon, Archie?" asked Barret,

“ Pretty well with some of the views ; but I ruined the last one, because father would have me introduce Captain McPherson and his man McGregor.”

“ Is that so, captain ? ” asked Mrs. Gordon.

“ Oo, ay ; it iss true enough,” answered the skipper, with a grim smile. “ He made a queer like mess o’ me, what-ē-ver.”

“ How was it, Archie ? ”

“ Well, mother, this is how it was. You know the waterfall at the head of Raven’s Nook ? Well, I have long wanted to take that, so I went up with father and Mr. Mabberly. We found tne captain and McGregor sitting there smoking their pipes, and when I was arranging the camera, the captain said to Mc——”

“ No, Maister Archie,” interrupted the skipper ; “ I did not say anything to Shames. You should be more parteekler. But Shames said something to *me*, what-ē-ver.”

“ Just so ; I forgot,” continued Archie. “ Well, McGregor said to the captain, ‘ What would you think if we wass to sit still an’ co into the pictur’ ? ’ ”

“ Oo, ay ; that was just it, an’ fery like him too,” said the skipper, laughing at Archie’s imitation, though he failed to recognise the similarity to his own drawling and nasal tones. People always do thus fail. We can never see ourselves !

“ Well,” continued Archie, “ father insisted that I was to take them, though they quite spoiled the view. So I did ; but in the very middle of the operation, what did the captain do but insist on changing his——”

“Not at all, Maister Archie,” again interrupted the skipper; “you have not got the right of it. It wass Shames said to me that he thought you had feenished, an’ so I got up; an’ then you roared like a wild bullock to keep still, and so what could I do but keep still? an’ so——”

“Exactly; that was it,” cried Archie, interrupting in his turn; “but you kept still *standing*, and so there were three figures in the picture when it was done, and your fist in the standing one came right in front of your own nose in the sitting one, for all the world as if you were going to knock yourself down. Such a mess it was altogether!”

“That iss fery true. It wass a mess, what-ē-ver!”

“You must show me this curious photograph, Archie, after lunch,” said Barret; “it must be splendid.”

“But it is not so splendid as my dolly,” chimed in Flo. “I’ll show you zat after lunch too.”

Accordingly, after the meal was over, Archie carried Barret off to his workshop. Then Flo took him to the nursery, where she not only showed him the portrait of the nigger doll, which was a striking likeness—for dolls invariably sit well—but took special pains to indicate the various points which had “come out” so “bootifully”—such as the nails which Junkie had driven into its wooden head for the purpose of making it behave better; the chip that Junkie had taken off the end of its nose when he tried to convert that feature into a Roman; the deep line drawn round the

head close to the hair by Junkie, when, as the chief of the Micmac Indians, he attempted to scalp it ; and the hole through the right eye, by which Junkie proposed to let a little more light into its black brain.

Having seen and commented on all these things, Barret retired to the smoking room, not to smoke, but to consult a bundle of newspapers which the post had brought to the house that day.

For it must not be imagined that the interests and amusements by which he was surrounded had laid the ghost of the thin, little old lady whom he had murdered—at least run down—in London. No ; wherever he went, and whatever he did, that old lady, like Nemesis, pursued him. When he looked down, she lay sprawling—a murdered, at least a manslaughtered, victim—at his feet. When he looked up, she hung, like the sword of Damocles, by a single fibre of maiden's hair over his head.

It was of no use that his friend Jackman rallied him on the point.

“My dear fellow,” he would say, “don't you see that if you had really killed her, the thing would have been published far and wide all over the kingdom, with a minute description, and perhaps a portrait of yourself on the bicycle, in all the illustrated papers? Even if you had only injured her severely, they would have made a sensation of it, with an offer, perhaps, of a hundred pounds for your capture, and a careful indication of the streets through which you passed when you ran away——”

“Ay, that’s what makes the matter so much worse,” Barret would reply; “the unutterable meanness of running away!”

“But you repented of that immediately,” Jackman would return in soothing tones; “and you did your utmost to undo it, though the effort was futile.”

Barret was usually comforted a good deal by the remarks of his friend, and indeed frequently forgot his trouble, especially when meditating on botanical subjects with Milly. Still, it remained a fact that he was haunted by the little old lady, more or less, and had occasional bad dreams, besides becoming somewhat anxious every time he opened a newspaper.

While Barret and the skipper were thus taking what the latter called an easy day of it, their friend Mabberly, with Eddy and Junkie and the seaman McGregor, had gone over the pass in the waggonette to the village of Cove for a day’s sea-fishing. They were driven by Ivor Donaldson.

“You’ll not have been in these parts before, sir?” said Ivor, who was a quiet, polite, and sociable man when not under the influence of drink.

“No, never,” answered Mabberly, who sat on the seat beside him; “and if it had not been for our misfortune, or the carelessness of that unknown steamer, I should probably never have known of the existence of your beautiful island. At least, I would have remained in ignorance of its grandeur and beauty.”

“That proves the truth of the south-country sayin’, sir,—‘It’s an ill wind that blaws nae guid.’”

“It does, indeed; for although the loss of my father’s yacht is a very considerable one, to have missed the hospitality of the laird of Kinlossie and the rambling over your magnificent hills would have been a greater misfortune.”

The keeper, who cherished a warm feeling for old Mr. Gordon, and admired him greatly, expressed decided approval of the young man’s sentiments, as was obvious from the pleased smile on his usually grave countenance, though his lips only gave utterance to the expression, “Fery true, sir; you are not far wrong.”

At the Eagle Pass they halted a few minutes to breathe the horses. Eddy and Junkie, of course, jumped down, followed by James McGregor, with whom they had already formed a friendship.

“Come away, an’ we’ll show you the place where Milly fell down. Come along, quicker, Shames,” cried Junkie, adopting the name that the skipper used; for the boy’s love of pleasantry not infrequently betrayed him into impudence.

With a short laugh, Mabberly turned to Ivor, and asked if Shames was the Gaelic for James

“No, sir,” replied the keeper; “but James is the English for Shames.”

“Ha! you are quoting now—or rather, misquoting—from the lips of some Irishman.”

“Weel, sir, I never heard it said that quota-ashun wass a sin,” retorted Ivor; then, turning to the stupendous cliff that frowned above them, “Hev ye heard of the prophecy, sir, aboot this cliff?”

“No. What is it?”

“It’s said that the cliff is to be the scene of a ghost story, a love story, and a murder all at the same time.”

“Is that all, Ivor? Did the prophet give no indication how the stories were to end, or who the murderer is to be, or the murdered one?”

“Never a word, sir; only they wass all to be aboot the same time. Indeed, the prophet, whether man or wuman, is not known. Noo, we better shump up.”

In a few minutes the waggonette was rattling down the slopes that led to Cove, and soon afterwards they were exchanging greetings with old Ian Anderson, the fisherman.

“Iss it to fush, ye’ll be wantin’?” asked Ian, as he ushered the party into his cottage, where Mrs. Anderson was baking oat cakes, and Aggy was busy knitting socks with her thin fingers as deftly and rapidly as if she had been in robust health.

“Yes, that is our object to-day,” said Mabberly. “Good day, Mrs. Anderson; good day, Aggy. I’m glad to see you looking so much better, though I can’t see very well for your cottage is none of the lightest,” he said, glancing at the small window, where a ragged head, with a flattened white nose, accounted for the obscurity.

“There might be *more* light,” said Ian, seizing a thick thorn stick, and making a sudden demonstration towards the door, the instant effect of which action was an improvement in the light. It did not last long, however, for “Tonal,” after watching at the corner of

the cottage long enough to make sure that the demonstration was a mere feint, returned to his post of observation.

“Yes, sir,” remarked Mrs. Anderson; “Aggy is much better. The fresh air is doin’ her cood already, an’ the peels that the shentleman—your friend—gave her is workin’ wonders.”

“They usually do, of one sort or another,” returned Mabberly, with a peculiar smile. “I’m glad they happen to be wonders of the right sort in Aggy’s case. My friend has been out in India, and his prescriptions have been conceived in a warm climate, you see, which may account for their wonder-working qualities. Can we have your boat to-day, Mr. Anderson?”

“Oo, ay; ye can hev that, sir,” said Ian, summoning Donald to his presence with a motion of his finger. “Tonal’,” he said, when ragged head stood at the open door, “hev we ony pait?”

“Ay, plenty.”

“Co doon, then, an’ git the poat ready.”

The boy disappeared without reply—a willing messenger. A few minutes more, and Ivor and Ian were rowing the boat towards a part of the sea which was deemed good fishing ground, while the rest of the party busied themselves arranging the lines.

Strong brown lines they were, wound on little square wooden frames, each with a heavy leaden sinker and a couple of strong coarse hooks of whitened metal attached to the lines by stout whipcord; for the denizens of those western waters were not the poddlies,

coddlings, and shrimps that one is apt to associate with summer resorts by the sea. They were those veritable inhabitants of the deep that figure on the slabs of Billingsgate and similar markets—plaice and skate of the largest dimensions, congers that might suggest the great sea serpent, and even sharks of considerable size.

The surroundings were cognate. Curlews and sandpipers whistled on the shore, complaining sea-mews sailed overhead, and the low-lying skerries outside were swarming with “skarts” and other frequenters of the wild north.

“Oh, *what* a funny face!” exclaimed Junkie, as a great seal rose head and shoulders out of the sea, not fifty yards off, to look at them. Its observations induced it to sink promptly.

“Let co the anchor, Tonal’,” said Ian; “the pottom should be cood here.”

“Hand me the pait, Junkie,” said McGregor.

“Shie a bit this way,” shouted Eddy.

“There—I’ve broke it!” exclaimed Junkie, almost whimpering, as he held up the handle of his knife in one hand, and in the other a mussel with a broken blade sticking in it.

“Never mind, Junkie. You can have mine, and keep it,” said Mabberly, handing to the delighted boy a large buck-horn-handled knife, which bristled with appliances.

“An’ don’t try it on again,” said Ian. “Here iss pait for you, my poy.”



"IT PROVED TO BE A REAL SHARK, FIVE FEET LONG"

A few minutes more, and the lines were down, and expectation was breathlessly rampant.

“Hi!” burst from Eddy, at the same moment that “Ho!” slipped from McGregor; but both ceased to haul in on finding that the “rugs” were not repeated.

“Hallo!” yelled “Tonal’,” who fished beside Junkie, on feeling a tug worthy of a whale; and “Hee! hee!” burst from Junkie, whose mischievous hand had caused the tug when ragged head was not looking.

In the midst of these false alarms Ivor drew up his line, and no one was aware of his success until a fish of full ten pounds’ weight was floundering in the boat. The boys were yet commenting on it noisily, when Ian put a large cod beside it.

“*What* a rug!” cried Eddy, beginning to haul up in violent haste.

“Hev a care, or the line will pairt,” said McGregor.

At the same moment “Shames” himself gave a jerk, as if he had received an electric shock, and in a few seconds a large plaice and a small crab were added to the “pile”!

“I’ve got *something* at last,” said Mabberly, doing his best to repress excitement as he hauled in his line deliberately.

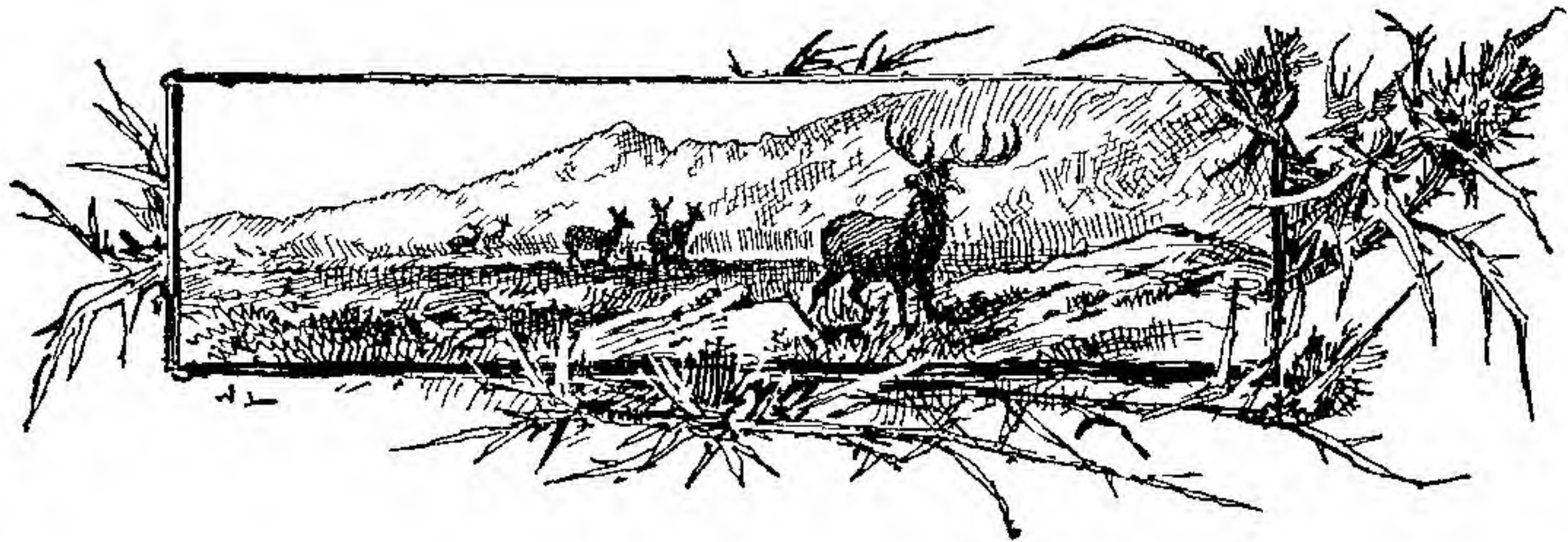
The something turned out to be an eel about four feet long, which went about the boat as if it were in its native element, and cost an amazing amount of exertion, whacking, and shouting, to subdue.

But this was nothing to the fish with which Junkie began to struggle immediately after, and which proved

to be a real shark, five feet long. After the united efforts of Ian and Donald had drawn it to the surface, Junkie was allowed to strike the gaff into it, and a loud cheer greeted the monster of the deep as it was hurled into the bottom of the boat.

Thus, in expectation, excitement, and animation, they spent the remainder of that memorable day.





CHAPTER VII.

AMAZING DEEDS AND MISDEEDS AT A DEER-DRIVE.

FOR some casts of mind there is no aspect of nature so enchanting or romantic as that which is presented on a fine summer day from the vantage ground of a ridge or shoulder high up on the mountains of one of our western isles.

It may be that the union of the familiar and beautiful with the unfamiliar and wild is that which arouses our enthusiastic admiration. As we stand in the calm genial atmosphere of a summer day, surveying the land and sea-scape from a commanding height that seems to have raised us above the petty cares of life, the eye and mind pass like the lightning-flash from the contemplation of the purple heather and purple plants around—and from the home-feelings thereby engendered—to the grand, apparently illimitable ocean, and the imagination is set free to revel in the unfamiliar and romantic regions “beyond seas.”

Some such thoughts were passing in the mind of Giles Jackman, as he stood alone, rifle in hand, on such a height one splendid forenoon, and contemplated the magnificent panorama.

Far down below—so far that the lowing of the red and black specks, which were cattle, and the bleating of the white specks, which were sheep, failed to reach him—a few tiny cottages could be seen, each in the midst of a green patch that indicated cultivation. Farther on, a snow-white line told where the wavelets kissed the rugged shore, but no sound of the kiss reached the hunter's ear. Beyond, as if floating on the calm water, numerous rocky islets formed the playground of innumerable gulls, skarts, seals, loons, and other inhabitants of the wild north; but only to the sense of vision were their varied activities perceptible. Among these islets were a few blacker spots, which it required a steady look to enable one to recognise as the boats of fishermen; but beyond them no ship or sign of man was visible on the great lone sea, over and reflected in which hung a few soft and towering masses of cloudland.

“If thus Thy meaner works are fair,
And beautiful beyond compare;
How glorious must the mansions be
Where Thy redeemed shall dwell with Thee!”

Jackman murmured rather than spoke the words, for no human ear was there to hear. Nevertheless there were human ears and tongues also, not far distant, engaged in earnest debate. It was on one of the ledges

of the Eagle Cliff that our hunter stood. At another part of the same cliff, close to the pass where Milly Moss met with her accident, Allan Gordon stood with nearly all his visitors and several of his retainers around him.

“Higher up the pass you’ll have a much better chance, Mr. Barret. Is it not so, Ivor?”

The keeper, who, in kilt, hose, and bonnet, was as fine a specimen of a tall athletic Highlander as one could wish to see, replied that that was true.

“Nae doot,” he said, “I hev put Mr. Jackman in the best place of all, for, whatever way the deer come, they’ll hev to pass close, either above or below him—an’ that’s maybe as weel for him wi’ his queer new-fashioned rifle; but at the heed o’ the pass is the next best place. The only thing is that ye’ll hev to tak’ sure aim, for there’s more room for them to stray, an’ ye may chance to git only a lang shot.”

“Well, then, it is not the place for me, for I am a poor shot,” said Barret; “besides, I have a fancy to stay here, where I am. You say it is a very good spot, Ivor, I understand?”

“Weel, it’s no’ that bad as a spote,” answered the keeper, with a grim smile, for he had not much opinion of Barret’s spirit as a sportsman; “but it’s ackward as the lawnd lies.”

“Never mind. I’ll stay here, and you know, laird, that I have some pleasant associations with it in connection with your niece.”

“That is more than Milly has,” returned the old

gentleman, laughing. "However, have your way. Now, gentlemen, we must place ourselves quickly, for the beaters will soon be entering the wood. I will take you, Mr. Mabberly, to a spot beyond the pass where you will be pretty sure of a shot. And MacRummle—where shall we place him?"

"He can do nothing wi' the gun at a', sir," muttered the keeper, in a low voice, so that he might not be overheard. "I wad putt him doon at the white rock. He'll git a lang shot at them there. Of course he'll miss, but that'll do weel enough for him—for he's easy pleased; ony way, if he tak's shootin' as he tak's fishin', a mere sight o' the deer, like the rise o' a salmon, 'll send him home happy."

"Very well, Ivor, arrange as you think best. And how about Captain McPherson and McGregor?"

"I'll tak' care o' them mysel,' sir."

"Ye need na' fash yer heed aboot us, laird," said the skipper. "Bein' more used to the sea than the mountains, we will be content to look on. Iss that not so, Shames?"

"That iss so—what-ē-ver," returned the seaman.

"Well, come along then; the beaters must be at work now. How many did you get, Ivor?"

"I'm not exactly sure, sir," returned the keeper; "there's Ian Anderson an' Tonal' from Cove, an' Mister Archie an' Eddy, an' Roderick—that's five. Oo, ay, I forgot, there's that queer English loon, Robin Tips—he's no' o' much use, but he can mak' a noise—besides three o' Mr. Grant's men."

“That’s plenty—now then——”

“Please, father,” said Junkie, who had listened with open eyes and mouth, as well as ears, for this was his first deer-stalk, “may I stop with Mr. Barret?”

“Certainly, my boy, if Mr. Barret does not object.”

Of course Mr. Barret did not object, though he was rather surprised at this mark of preference.

“I say, me boy,” whispered Pat Quin, “ask av I may stop wid ye.”

Junkie looked at the Irishman doubtfully for a moment, then said,—

“Father, Quin says he wants to stop with me.”

“You mayn’t do that, Quin,” returned the laird with a smile; “but you may go and stay with your master. I heard him say that he would like you to be with him to keep you out of mischief.”

“Thankee, sor. I was used to attend on ’im in the jungles to carry his spare guns, for it’s ellyphints, no less, that we was used to bag out there; but I make no question he can amuse himsilf wid deer an’ things like that where there’s nothin’ better. He was always aisy to plaze, like Mr. MacRummle.”

“Just so, Quin; and as MacRummle knows the hill, and has to pass the place where Mr. Jackman has been left, you had better follow him.”

This arranged, the different parties took up their positions to await the result of the beating of a strip of dwarf forest, several miles in extent, which clothed part of the mountain slopes below the Eagle Cliff.

On reaching the spot where Jackman was stationed, old MacRummle explained to him the various arrangements that had just been made for the comfort of all.

“I am sorry they gave me the best place,” said Jackman. “I suppose it is because the laird thinks my experience in India entitles me to it; but I would much rather that Mabberly or Barret had got the chance, for I’m used to this sort of thing, and after bagging elephants, I can afford to lay on my oars and see my friends go in and win.”

“An’ sure, aren’t thim the very words I said, sor?” put in Quin.

“Have they given you a good place?” asked Jackman of MacRummle, taking no notice of his man’s remarks.

“They’ve given me the worst,” said the old man, simply; “and I cannot blame them, for, as the keeper truly remarked, I can do nothing with the gun”—still less with the rifle, he might have added! “At the same time, I confess it would have added somewhat to the zest of the day if Ivor had allowed me some degree of hope. He thought I didn’t overhear him, but I did; for they give me credit for greater deafness than I deserve.”

There was something so pitiful, yet half amusing, in the way in which this was said, that Jackman suddenly grasped the old gentleman’s hand.

“Mr. MacRummle,” he said firmly, “will you do me a favour?”

“Certainly, with pleasure—it I can.”

“You can—and you shall. It is this: change places and rifles with me.”

“My dear, kind sir, you don’t know what you ask. My rifle is an old double-barrel muzzle loader, and at the white rock you wouldn’t have the ghost of a chance. I know the place well, having often passed it in fishing excursions up the burns. Besides, I never used a repeating rifle in my life. I couldn’t manage it, even if I were to try.”

“Mr. MacRummle, are you not a Highlander?”

“I believe I am!” replied the old man, drawing himself up with a smile.

“And is not that equivalent to saying that you are a man of your word?”

“Well—I suppose it is so—at least it should be so.”

“But you will prove that it is not so, if you fail to do me a favour that lies in your power, after promising to do it. Come now, we have no time to lose. I will show you how to use the repeater. See; it is empty just now. All you have to do is to take aim as you would with any ordinary rifle, and pull the trigger. When the shot is off, you load again by simply doing *this* to the trigger-guard—so. D’you understand?”

“Yes, perfectly; but is that all? no putting in or cartridges anywhere?”

“No, nothing more. Simply do *that* (open—and the cartridge flies out), and *that* (shut—and you are loaded and ready to fire)! Now, try it. That’s it!

Capital! Couldn't be better. Why, you were born to be a sportsman!"

"Yes, with fish," remarked the gratified old man, as he went through the motions of loading and firing to perfection.

"Now, then, I will load it thus. Watch me."

As he spoke, he filled the chamber under the barrel with cartridge after cartridge to the amazement of MacRummle and the amusement of Quin, who looked on.

"How many shots will it fire without reloading?" asked the old man at length.

"Sixteen," replied Jackman.

"What! sixteen? But—but how will I ever know how many I've let off?"

"You don't require to know. Just blaze away till it refuses to fire! Now, I must be off. Where is this white rock that I have to go to?"

"There it is—look. A good bit down the hill, on the open ground near the forest. If you have good eyes, you can see it from here. Look, just behind the ridge. D'you see?"

"I see. Great luck to you. Do good work, and teach that rascal Ivor to respect your powers with the rifle. Come along, Quin."

"But really, my young friend, it is too good, too self-denying of you to——"

He stopped, for Jackman and Quin were already striding down the mountain on their way to the white rock.

MacRummle had been somewhat excited by the enthusiasm of his young friend and the novelty of his situation. To say truth, he would much rather have been pottering along the banks of one of his loved Highland streams, rod in hand, than crouching in the best pass of the Eagle Cliff in expectation of red deer; but being an amiable and sympathetic man, he had been fired by the enthusiasm of the household that morning, and, seeing that all were going to the drive, including the laird, he made up his mind to brace himself up to the effort, and float with the current. His enthusiasm had not cooled when he reached the Eagle Cliff, and Jackman's kindness, coupled with hope and the repeating rifle, increased it even to white heat. In which condition he sat down on a rock, removed his hat, and wiped his bald, perspiring head, while a benignant smile illuminated his glowing features.

About the same time, Barret and Junkie having selected a convenient mass of rock as their outlook, so that they could command the pass for some distance in both directions without exposing themselves to view, rested the rifle against the cliff and began to talk. Soon the young man discovered that the little boy, like many other mischievous boys, was of an exceedingly inquiring disposition. Among other things, he not only began an intelligent inquiry about the locks of a rifle, but a practical inquiry with his fingers, which called for remonstrance.

“Do you know, Junkie, that this is the very spot

where your Cousin Milly fell?" said Barret, by way of directing the urchin's thoughts into a safer channel.

"Is it? Oh, dear, *what* a thump she must have come down!"

"Yes, indeed, a dreadful thump—poor thing. She was trying to get flowers at the time. Do you know that she is exceedingly fond of flowers?"

"Oh, don't I? She's got books full of them—all pasted in with names printed under them. I often wonder what she sees in flowers to be so fond of them. I don't care a button for them myself, unless they smell nice. But I often scramble after them for her."

"There is a good deal to like in flowers besides the smell," said Barret, assuming an instructive tone, which Junkie resented on the spot.

"Oh, yes, I don't want to know; you needn't try to teach me," he said, firmly.

"Of course not. I wouldn't think of teaching you, my boy. You know I'm not a schoolmaster. I'm not clever enough for that, and when I was your age, I hated to be taught. But I could *show* you some things about flowers and plants that would astonish you. Only it would not be safe to do it just now, for the deer might come up and——"

"No they won't," interrupted the boy; "it's a monstrous big wood they've got to pass through before they can come here, so we have time to look at some of the 'stonishin' things."

“Well, then, come. We will just go a little way up the cliff.”

Leading Junkie away among the masses of fallen rock, which strewed that ledge of the cliff, the wily youth began to examine plants and flowers minutely, and to gradually arouse in the boy's mind an interest in such parts of botanical science as he was capable of understanding.

Meanwhile the small army of beaters had extended themselves across the distant end of the forest, which, being some miles off, and on the other side of a great shoulder of the mountain, was not only out of sight, but out of hearing of the stalkers who watched the passes of the Eagle Cliff.

All the beaters, or drivers, were well acquainted with the work they had to do, with the exception of Robin Tips, to whom, of course, it was quite new. But Ian Anderson put him under Donald's care, with strict injunctions to look well after him.

“Now, Tonal', see that ye don't draw together an' git ta-a-lkin' so as to forget what ye're about. Keep him at the right distance away from ye, an' as much in line as ye can.”

“Oo, ay,” returned ragged head, in a tone that meant, when translated into familiar English, “Don't teach your grandmother to suck eggs!”

In a sequestered dell on the slope of the hills, a lordly stag and several hinds were enjoying themselves that morning among the bracken and bright mosses, partially screened from the sun by the overarching

boughs of birch and hazel, and solaced by the tinkling music of a neighbouring rill. Thick underwood concealed the dell on all sides; grey lichen-covered boulders surrounded it; no sound disturbed it save the faint cry of the plover and curlew on the distant shore, or the flap of a hawk's wing as it soared overhead. Altogether it looked like a safe and sure retreat, but it did not prove to be so.

Mingled with the plaintive cries of the wild fowl, there came a faint—barely perceptible—sound of the human voice. The stag pricked up his ears, and raised his antlered head. It was by no means a new sound to him. The shepherd's voice calling to his collie on the mountain side was a familiar sound that experience had taught him boded no evil. The converse of friends as they plodded along the roads or foot-paths that often skirted his lairs, had a tone of innocence about it which only induced caution—not alarm. But there was nothing of this in the sounds that now met his ears. He raised himself higher, opened his nostrils wider, sniffed the tainted air, and then, turning his graceful head, made some remark—we presume, though we cannot be positive on this point—to his wives.

These, meek and gentle—as females usually are, or ought to be—turned their soft inquiring gaze on their lord. Thus they stood, as if spell-bound, while the sounds slowly but steadily increased in volume and approached their retreat. Presently a shoulder of the mountain was turned by the drivers, and their discor-

dant voices came down on the gentle breeze with unmistakable significance.

We regret being unable to report exactly what the stag then said to his wives, but the result was that the entire family bounded from their retreat, and, in the hurry and alarm of the moment, scattered along various glades, all of which, however, trended ultimately towards those mountain fastnesses that exist about and beyond the Eagle Cliff.

Two of the hinds followed their lord in a direction which led them out of the wood within sight of, though a considerable distance from, the white rock behind which Jackman and Quin were concealed. The others fled by tracks somewhat higher on the hill-sides, where however, as the reader knows, the enemy was posted to intercept them.

"Sure it's a purty stag, afther all," whispered Quin, who, in spite of elephantine-Indian sport, was somewhat excited by this sudden appearance of the Scottish red-deer. "But they're a long way off, sor."

"Not too far, if the rifle is true," said Jackman, in a very low voice, as he put up the long-range sight.

"You'll git a good chance at the stag whin he tops the hillock forenent you, sor," remarked the somewhat garrulous Irishman.

"I won't fire at the stag, Quin," returned Jackman, quietly. "You and I have surely killed enough of bigger game abroad. We can afford to let the stag pass on to our friends higher up, some of whom have

never seen a red-deer before, and may never have a chance of seeing one again."

All this was said by the sportsman in a low, soft voice, which could not have been heard three yards off, yet his sharp eye was fixed intently on the passing deer. Seeing that there was no likelihood of their coming nearer, he raised his rifle, took steady but quick aim, and fired. One of the hinds dropped at once; the other followed her terrified lord as he dashed wildly up the slope.

Partial deafness is a slight disadvantage in deer-stalking. So, at least, MacRummle discovered that day. After having wiped his forehead, as already described, he set himself steadily to fulfil the duties of his situation. These were not so simple as one might suppose, for, as had been explained to him by Jackman, he had to watch two passes—one close above his post, the other close below it—either of which might bring the deer within easy reach of his rifle, but of course there was the uncertainty as to which of the two passes the deer would choose. As it was a physical impossibility to have his eyes on both passes at once, the old gentleman soon found that turning his head every few seconds from one side to the other became irksome. Then it became painful. At last it became torture, and then he gave up this plan in despair, resolving to devote a minute at a time to each pass, although feeling that by so doing his chances were greatly diminished.

When Jackman fired his shot, MacRummle's ears

refused to convey the information to his brain. He still sat there, turning his head slowly to and fro, and feeling rather sleepy. One of the scattered deer, which had gone higher up the mountain, passed him by the upper track. MacRummle was gazing at the lower track just then! Having given the allotted time to it, he turned languidly and beheld the hind, trotting rather slowly, for it was somewhat winded.

The sight sent sportsman-fire through the old gentleman's entire frame. He sprang, he almost tumbled up, but before he could fire, a jealous boulder intervened. Rushing up a few yards, he was just in time to see the animal bound over a cliff and disappear.

Depressed beyond measure, he returned to his post and resumed the rapid head-motion which he had foolishly discontinued. This was fortunate, for it enabled him to see in time the stag and hind which Jackman had sent bounding towards him. Another moment, and the affrighted creatures were within range. MacRummle sprang up, put the repeater to his shoulder, and then commenced a fusilade that baffles description. Bang, bang, bang, went the repeater; bang, bang, double-bang, and banging everywhere went the startled echoes of the mountain. Never since it sprang from the volcanic forces of nature had the Eagle Cliff sent forth such a spout of rattling reverberation. The old man took no aim whatever. He merely went through the operations of load and fire with amazing rapidity. Each crack delivered into the arms of echo was multiplied a hundredfold. Showers of

bullets seemed to hail around the astounded quarry. Smoke, as of a battle, enshrouded the sportsman. The rifle became almost too hot to hold, and when at last it ceased to respond to the drain upon its bankrupt magazine, the stag and hind lay dead upon the track, and MacRummle lay exhausted with excitement and exertion upon the heather!

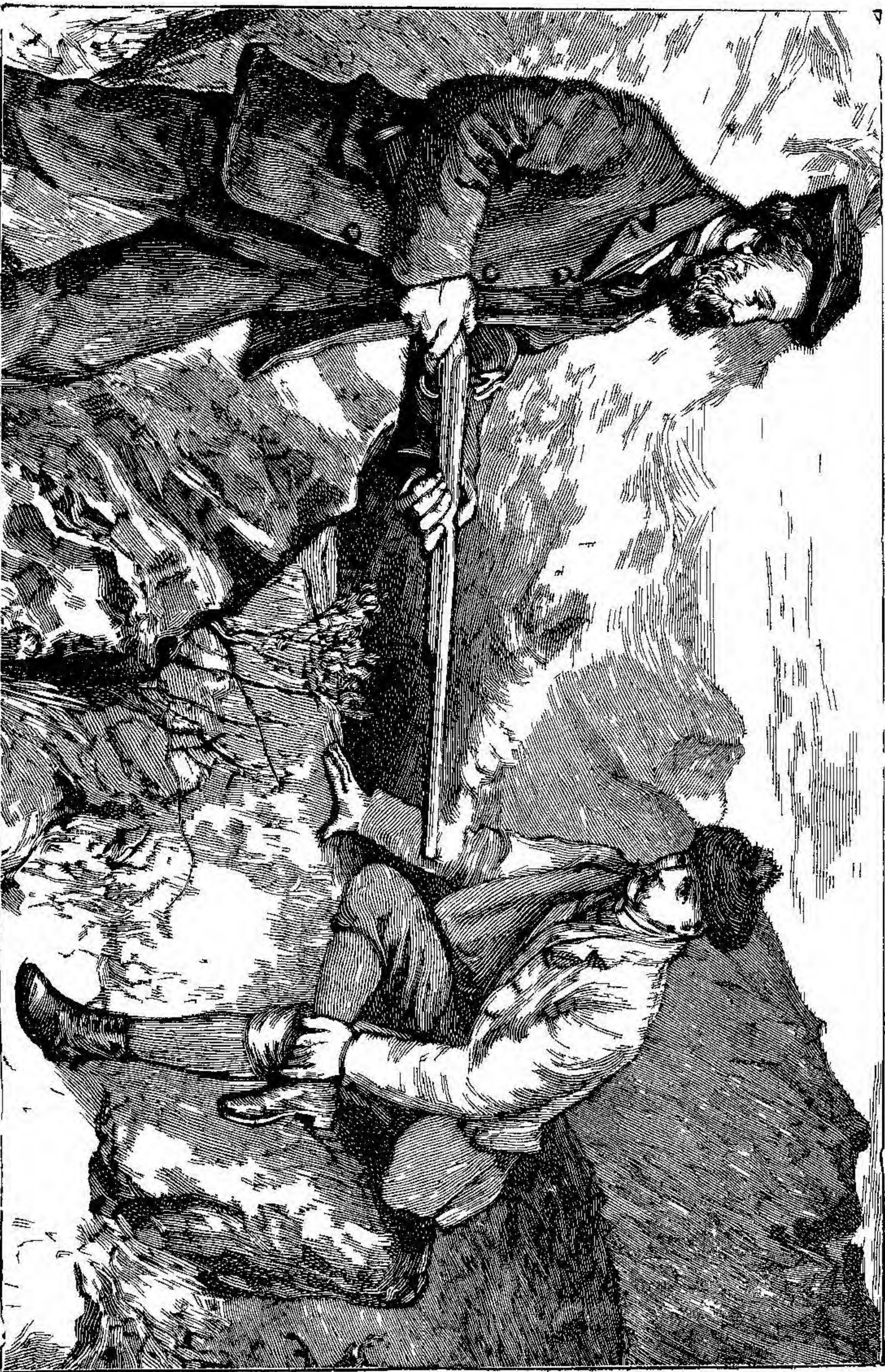
This unwonted fusillade took the various parties higher up the hill by surprise. To Ivor, indeed, it was quite a new experience, and he regarded it with a smile of grim contempt.

“There iss noise enough—what-ē-ver!” remarked Skipper McPherson, who sat beside the keeper with a double-barrelled gun charged with buckshot, which he had in readiness.

“Look! look!” exclaimed Ivor, pointing to another part of the pass, “your friend McGregor has got a fright!”

“Ay, that’s true. Shames would be troubled in his mind, I think.”

There was indeed some reason to suppose so. The worthy seaman, having got tired of waiting, had, against Ivor’s advice, wandered a few yards along the pass, where, seeing something farther on that aroused his curiosity, he laid down the single-barrelled fowling-piece with which he had been provided, and began to clamber. Just as the repeater opened fire, two hinds which had got ahead of the others, ran through the pass by different tracks. One of these McGregor saw before it came up, and he rushed wildly back for his



“‘EH! MAN, ARE ‘EE SHOT?’ CRIED THE CAPTAIN, ANXIOUSLY.”

gun. It was this act that his comrades rightly attributed to mental perturbation.

“Look out!” whispered the keeper.

As he spoke the other hind, doubling round a mass of fallen rock, almost leaped into McGregor’s arms. It darted aside, and the seaman, uttering a wild shout, half raised his gun and fired. The butt hit him on the chest and knocked him down, while the shot went whizzing in all directions round his comrades, cutting their garments, but fortunately doing them no serious injury.

“Oh, Shames! ye was always in too great a hurry,” remonstrated the skipper, oblivious of the fact that he himself had been too slow.

“Quick, man, fire!” cried Ivor, testily.

The captain tried to energise. In doing so he let off one barrel at the celestial orbs unintentionally. The other might as well have gone the same way, for all the execution it did.

When he looked at the keeper, half apologetically, he saw that he was quietly examining his leg, which had been penetrated by a pellet.

“Eh! man, are ’ee shot?” cried the captain, anxiously.

“Oo, ay, but I’m none the worse o’ it! I had a presentiment o’ somethin’ o’ this sort, an’ loaded his gun wi’ small shot,” replied the keeper.

Profound were the expressions of apology from McGregor, on learning what he had done, and patronisingly cool were the assurances of Ivor that the injury

was a mere flea-bite. And intense was the astonishment when it was discovered that a stag and a hind had fallen to old MacRummle with that "tree-mendious" repeater! And great was the laughter afterwards, at lunch time on the field of battle, when Junkie gravely related that Barret was upon a precipice, trying to reach a rare plant, when the deer passed, so that he did not get a shot at all! And confused was the expression of Barret's face when he admitted the fact, though he carefully avoided stating that his mind was taken up at the time with a very different kind of deer!

It was afternoon when the assembled party, including drivers, sat down to luncheon on the hill-side, and began to allay the cravings of appetite, and at the same time to recount or discuss in more or less energetic tones, the varied experiences of the morning. Gradually the victuals were consumed, and the experiences pretty well thrashed out, including those of poor Mabberly, who had failed to get even a chance of a shot.

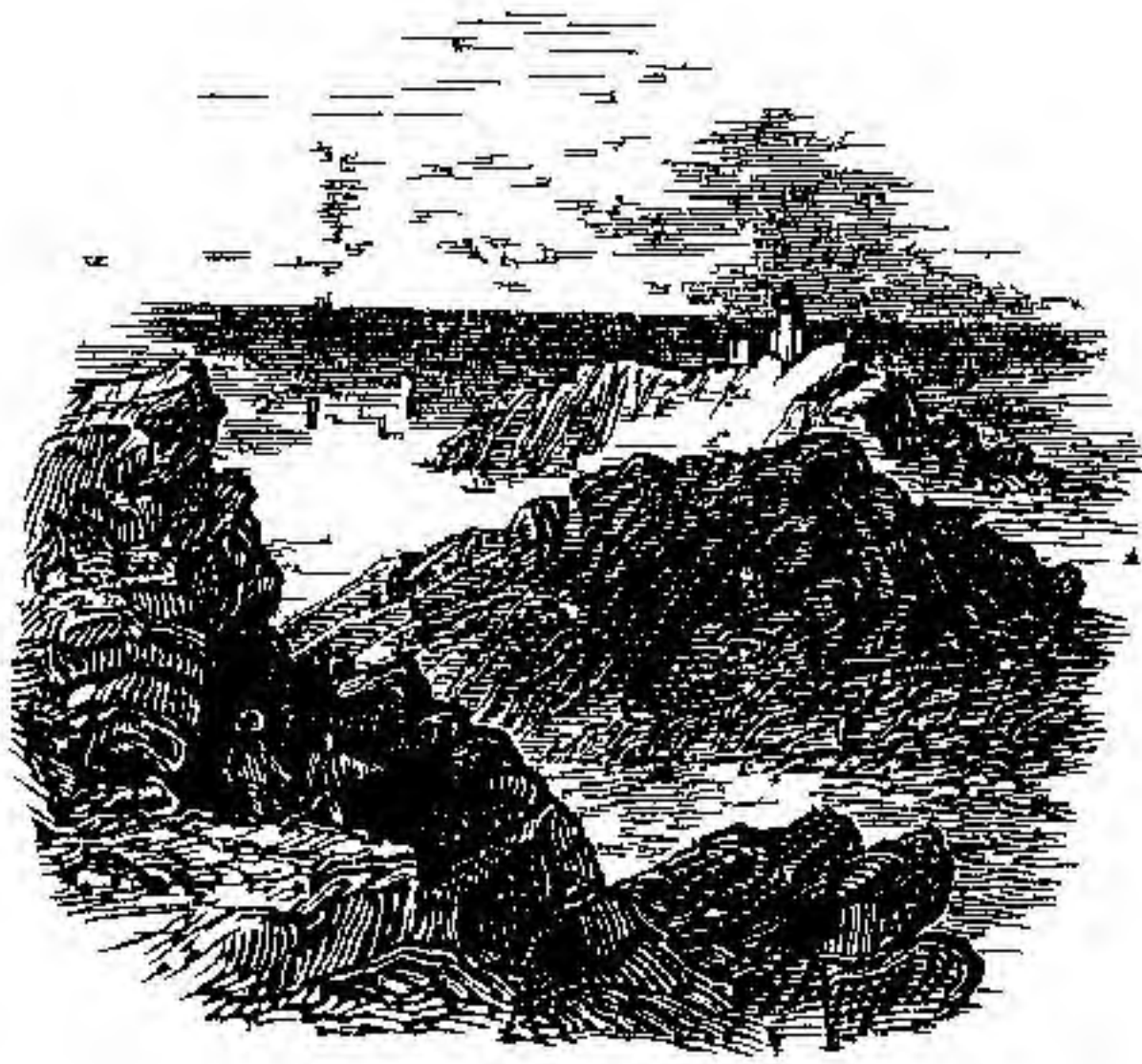
"An' sure it's no wonder at all," was Pat Quin's remark; "for the noise was almost as bad as that night when you an' me, sor, was out after the elephants in that great hunt in the North-western provinces of Indy."

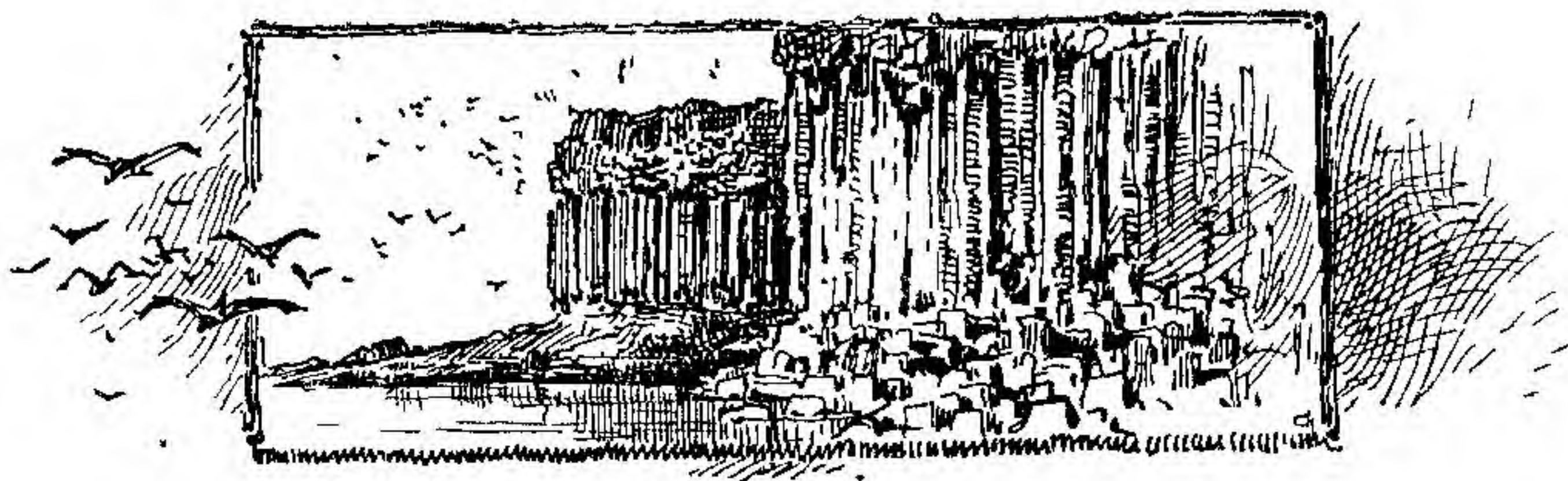
"Oh, *do* tell us about that," cried Junkie and his brothers, turning eagerly to Jackman.

"So I will, my boys; but not now. It will take too long. Some other time, in the house, perhaps, when a bad day comes."

“No, now, *now* !” cried Junkie.

Seeing that most of those present had lighted their pipes, and that the laird seemed to wish it, Jackman washed down his lunch with a glass of sparkling water, cleared his throat, and began.





CHAPTER VIII.

JACKMAN'S WONDERFUL ELEPHANT STORY.

“**O**NCE upon a time,” said Jackman, glancing at Junkie and Robin Tips, who sat before him open-mouthed and -eyed, as if ready to swallow anything.

“Yes,” murmured Junkie, nodding, “that’s the right way to begin.”

“But you must not interrupt, Junkie.”

“No, I won’t do it again; but first, tell me, is it true?”

“Yes, my boy; it is absolutely true in all its main points,” replied Jackman.

“Well, as I said, once upon a time, not very long ago, I was sent up to the North-west provinces of India, to a place near the base of the Himalaya mountain-range. The country was swarming with elephants at that time. You see, previous to that, the elephants had been hunted and killed to such an extent that the Government had been obliged to pass an Elephant

Preservation Act for their protection, and the Act worked so well that the elephants multiplied very fast. They roamed at will through the forests, and frequently, leaving these, made raids upon the cultivated lands, to the great damage of property and danger of human life from the 'rogues,' as old, solitary elephants which have been driven from the herds, are called. These 'rogues' are extremely ill-natured and dangerous, so it was found necessary to take steps to kill some of them, and thin the herds by capturing some of the females, which might be tamed and made useful.

"For this purpose of hunting and catching elephants a hunt upon a truly magnificent scale was instituted. Now, as it is very difficult to kill such huge creatures, and still more difficult to catch them, men are obliged to call to their aid tame elephants, which are trained for the purpose of what is called Khedda hunting. But I don't mean to tell you either about the killing or catching just now. I shall rather relate an extraordinary and thrilling incident that occurred before the hunt had properly begun.

"Great men from all parts of the country assembled at this hunt, some of them bringing troops of tame elephants and followers with them. There were governors and rajahs, and private secretaries, with some of their wives, military officers, forest officers, commissioners, collectors, superintendents, magistrates, surgeons, medical officers, and even clergymen, besides a host of smaller fry and servants. It was a regular army! The Maharajah of Bulrampore sent sixty-five

catching elephants, and five koonkies or fighting elephants, among which was a famous warrior named Chand Moorut. Along with these came a body of men trained to that special work. A good contingent also came from Rampore. The Rajah of Khyrigarh came in person with thirteen elephants and a noted fighting animal, named Berchir Bahadur; other elephants were collected from the rajahs and native gentlemen around. Among the koonkies, or gladiators, were two tremendous fellows, both as to colossal size and courage, named respectively Raj Mungul and Isri Pershad.

“But far before them all in towering height and stupendous weight and unconquerable courage, as well as warlike tendency, was the mighty Chand Moorut, whom I first mentioned. This grand, slow-moving, sedate hero of a hundred fights, was a sort of elephantine bull-dog; a concentrated earthquake; an animal thunder-bolt; a suppressed volcano. Nothing in the forests had yet been found which could stand before his onset. And when we saw him stalk solemnly into camp with his mahowt, or guide, looking like a small monkey on his great neck, and remembered his fame as a fighter and his eager thirst at all times for battle, we felt that the keystone had been put to the arch of our arrangements.

“This great mixed multitude was put under the direction of a Conservator of Forests, a man celebrated for his exploits and daring adventures in the field, and it was as a friend of his that I joined the hunt with my man, Pat Quin there.”

“Troth, sor, an’ av it wasn’t for Chand Moorut (blissin’s on his great sowl, av he has wan, an’ on his body av he hasn’t) your man Pat Quin would have been left there as flat as a pancake. Excuse me, sor, for spakin,’ but me feelin’s overcomed me.”

“No doubt, Quin, you had a narrow escape; I’ll come to that soon. Well, the spot at last chosen for pitching the camp was a splendid one, facing northward, where we had an extensive view of the great forests that stretched to the base of the irregular and rugged Sawalick hills. Behind these rose the mighty Himalayas themselves, their grand peaks seeming to push up into the very heavens, where the sun shone with dazzling brilliancy on their everlasting snows. The camp covered an immense piece of ground, which was partly open and partly dotted with clumps of trees. It was so large that the tents, etc., were arranged in streets, and our Director pitched his tent in the very centre of it, with all the tame elephants and their attendants around him.

“You may easily fancy that it was a noisy camp, with so many hundreds of men and animals around, full of excitement, more or less, about the coming hunt; for we had a number of men, called trackers, out in the woods, who had brought in news that a herd of wild elephants had just been discovered in the Saharanpur and Dun forests, on the banks of the Ganges.

“The glens in these forests were known to be well suited for hunting purposes, so our hopes and expecta-

tions were raised to a high pitch. Towards evening we had got pretty well settled down, when a rumour got about the camp that one of the Khedda elephants had killed a man, and that it was highly probable he would run *amuck* to the great danger of every one. It happened thus:

“A big tusker, named Mowla Buksh, was being taken by his mahowt to drink and bathe, according to custom, when it was observed that the elephant seemed to be out of temper. Just then one of the fodder-cutters chanced to pass by.

“‘Keep out of his way,’ cried the mahowt, in a warning tone. ‘There’s something wrong with him to-day. I won’t bathe him, I think.’

“‘Oh! he knows me well, and won’t harm me,’ returned the cutter.

“The words were scarcely out of the man’s mouth, when the brute rushed at him, knocked him down, gored him with his tusks, and kicked him after the fashion of enraged elephants. Of course the poor man was instantly killed. When this deed was done, Mowlah Buksh seemed to feel that, having lost his character, he might as well go on in his course of mischief. He became wild with fury, and kept throwing his head back in a vain endeavour to seize his mahowt with his trunk and kill him also. In this effort he failed. The mahowt, though old, was active and strong. He managed to hold on and sit so far back on the elephant’s hind quarters as to be just out of reach. Luckily the brute did not think of shaking him off.

Had he attempted that, he would soon have succeeded. The poor man would have fallen to the ground and been killed. Finding that he could not accomplish his purpose, the infuriated animal rushed towards the camp, where the khedda or hunting elephants were, and where, as I have said, our Director had pitched his tent. My own tent was close beside his.

“The first I heard of what was going on was from Quin, who came running into my tent, where I was sitting quietly at the time, cleaning my rifle. Quin’s eyes were starting out of his head, and there was, I assure you, nothing of the pleasant smile that rests on his face at this moment!

“‘Och, sor!’ gasped Quin, ‘Bowla Muk—no—Mowla Buksh—has gone mad entoirely!’

“I jumped up quickly, you may believe, for I didn’t often see *that* look on Quin’s face, and when I did, I knew well that something very serious was in the wind.

“‘Where away is he?’ I asked.

“‘Sorrow wan o’ me knows, sor,’ said Quin.

“Rushing out with no very fixed purpose in view, I soon found that the shouting in the camp was a sufficient guide to the spot where the mischief was going on. In a few minutes I came on a cordon of musketeers who had been hastily drawn up, so as to prevent Mowla Buksh from getting at the other elephants, for if he had succeeded in doing so, he would certainly have gone knocking about the smaller ones, perhaps maiming them, and killing every man

who might chance to come in his path. On the other hand, if the musketeers managed to turn him, there was the danger of his making for the main camp, and killing every one he could lay hold of in that direction.

“Of course the thought of turning out the big fighting elephants to master him occurred to every one; but even here there would be risk, for these gladiators would not rest content without knocking Mowla Buksh off his legs, in which case the mahowt would assuredly be killed. Besides, our Director chanced to be in the forest at the time, and no one else seemed ready to take the responsibility of ordering them out.

“When I came up to the musketeers, I saw the elephant rushing wildly about, trying to find a way through them, with the old mahowt sticking to his back like a burr.

“The Bulrampore men shouted to him to try and get the elephant to go to his standing-place, saying that if he could persuade him to sit down they would tie his legs up. After the brute had exhausted itself somewhat by rushing about, the mahowt did succeed in recovering control so far as to persuade him to move to his standing-place, which was not far distant, and to our great relief he sat down in the usual way. The Bulrampore men were as good as their word. Smart hands every one, they ran up with ropes and commenced tying up his hind legs. Being experts at the work, they manipulated the thick ropes with amazing rapidity, and had the panting animal almost secured when he

partially recovered, and began to understand what was being done to him. He started up indignantly, just before the knots were properly fastened, and struck out right and left with his trunk, scattering the men in all directions.

“Although the ropes had not been quite secured, they were sufficiently fast to impede his movements. He therefore took to venting his rage on the surrounding trees, and, really, until that day, I had not realised the prodigious strength of this king of beasts. He knocked and smashed them down right and left with the greatest possible ease, although, I do assure you, some of them were fully eight inches in diameter. All this time the old mahowt was clinging to his back, not daring to slip off.

“The men now began to lay large rope-nooses about here and there, in the hope that he would accidentally put a foot into one of them. But Mowla Buksh was much too knowing to be caught in this way. Whenever he came across one of these nooses, he took it up with his trunk and tossed it contemptuously aside. Gradually he worked his way up to a cluster of trees near the tent in which our Director's wife had been seated all the time—with what feelings I will not pretend to guess. In this cluster he spent two hours, smashing down trees all the time, and occasionally, by way of variety, trying to lay hold of the poor mahowt, who was gradually becoming exhausted through terror and the exertion of holding on.

“Strange to say, now and then the man appeared

to regain control over the beast, though only for a few seconds. During one of these intervals he even succeeded in making Mowia Buksh partially sit down.

“‘Och! now or niver! Off wid ye!’ yelled a splitting voice close to my ear! I need not tell you whose voice that was, or that its owner was skipping about like a gorilla, almost as mad as the elephant!”

“Ah! sor,” interrupted Quin, “don’t ye remimber how yourself was—but I’ll have mercy on ye! Go on, sor.”

“Well, I confess,” resumed Jackman, “that I was a little excited. However, the Bulrampore men echoed Quin’s advice in eagerly expressed Hindustani. The mahowt took it, slipped to the ground, and ran for his life! Fortunately the excited Mowla either did not perceive or did not care. He rose up and recommenced his work of destruction.

“All this time he had been freeing himself from the ropes with which he was imperfectly bound. At last he detached them entirely, and began to make furious rushes in every direction.

“At that critical moment our Director arrived on the scene. Seeing how matters stood he at once gave orders to have the fighting elephants brought to the front, as the only chance that remained to bring the mischief to an end. The orders were gladly and promptly obeyed.

“Before they arrived, however, Mowla Buksh, in one of his rushes, came straight to where Quin and I were standing——”

("Skippin', sor, ye said.")

"Well, skipping. But we stopped skipping at once, and took to running as hard as we could. We both ran through some soft reedy ground, where the brute overtook us. I glanced over my shoulder and saw him knock Quin into the rushes and set his enormous foot on him——"

"Oh! was he killed?" exclaimed Junkie with a look of consternation at the now heroic Quin!

There was a general burst of laughter, in which Junkie joined, for he saw the absurdity of the question which sudden anxiety had forced from him.

"But why wasn't you killed?" he asked almost indignantly.

"Whisht! honey, an' ye'll hear, av ye'll howld your tongue."

"You must know," continued Jackman, "that the place he had tumbled into was wet, soft ground, and Quin has a sharp way of looking after his life! Although half stunned he rolled to one side, so that only the side of the great foot came down on his shoulder and thrust him deep into the mud. I stopped at once with a feeling of horror, but without the slightest conception of what I meant to do, and the horror was deepened as I saw the monster turn with the evident intention of completing his work.

"At that terrible moment the colossal forms of Raj Mungul, Isri Pershad, and the mighty Chand Moorut appeared coming towards us. Mowla Buksh did not carry out his deadly intentions. There was 'method in

his madness.' Seeing the koonkies approach, he retreated at once to the shelter of the cluster of trees and waited.

"I rushed forward, expecting to find my man dead and flattened, but he rose slowly as I came up, and with an indescribable expression of countenance said, 'Arrah! then, but he *was* heavy!'"

"An' *that* must have been true—what-ē-ver" said McGregor, unable to restrain a comment at this point.

"What you remark is true likewise, Shames," said the skipper.

"Go on—quick!" cried Junkie, eagerly.

"Well, our Director gave orders to take Raj Mungul to the south side of the clump of trees, Isri Pershad to the west, and Chand Moorut to the east. It was impossible to let the last go in, though he was impatient to do so, for by that time it was getting dark, and his mahowt would have probably been swept off his back by the branches; and the risk of such a gladiator being let loose without a controlling hand was not to be thought of for a moment.

The difficulty was got over by means of a ruse. Two men were sent to the north side of the clump with orders to talk and attract the attention of Mowla. The plan succeeded. The moment the still fuming brute heard their voices, he went at them furiously! Now was the chance for the heroic Chand Moorut; and that warrior was never known to let an opportunity slip. No British bull-dog ever gave or accepted a challenge with more hilarious alacrity than he. As

soon as Mowla came out of the trees, Chand Moorut went at him with a rush that seemed incredible in such a mountain of usually slow and dignified flesh. But darkness, coupled perhaps with haste, interfered. He missed his mark, and Mowla Buksh, turning round, dashed straight at the tent, in front of which our Director and a friend were standing. The friend, who was a V.C. as well as a cool and intrepid sportsman, directed the light of a lantern full on the monster's face till it was close upon him, thus enabling the Director to plant a bullet in his head. Whether the shot gave him a headache or not, I cannot tell. The only certain effect it had was to turn the animal aside and cause it to rush off in the direction of the main camp, closely followed by Isri Pershad and Raj Mungul. Chand Moorut was held back in reserve. Happily Raj Mungul managed to outstrip and turn the runaway, and as Mowla Buksh came back, Chand Moorut got another chance at him. Need I say that he took advantage of it? Charging in like a live locomotive, he sent the mad creature flying—as if it had been a mere kitten—head over heels into a small hollow!

“Well done! Capital!” shouted Junkie at this point, unable to restrain himself, as, with glittering eyes, he glanced round the circle of listeners.

A laugh at his enthusiasm seemed to Junkie to endorse his sentiment, so he turned to Jackman and earnestly bade him to “go on.”

“There is not much to go on with now, my boy,” continued the narrator; “for Mowla Buksh being

down, the fighting elephants took good care to punish him well before they let him up again. But as the encounter had aroused the combative propensities of Chand Moorut, it was thought wise to remove him from the scene before he became too excited. This being managed by his mahowt, the punishing of the rebel was left to Isri Pershad and Raj Mungul, who did their work thoroughly. No sooner did the culprit scramble out of the hollow than Isri Pershad knocked him back into it, and pummelled him heartily with trunk and legs. Again Mowla Buksh rose, and this time Raj Mungul gave him a tap on the forehead with his own ponderous head, which sent him into a bed of giant rushes, over the top of which his little tail was seen to wriggle viciously as he disappeared with a crash.

“There he would probably have been content to lie still for a time, but his opponents had other views in regard to him. They went at him together, and so cuffed, kicked, bumped and pummelled him, that in about five minutes he was reduced to a pitiable state of humiliation. As Quin truly remarked at the time, his own mother would have failed to recognise him.

“Just at this point, to my surprise, the old mahowt came forward, with tears in his eyes, and begged that his elephant might be spared! It had been punished quite sufficiently, he thought. I was much impressed with this display of a tender, forgiving spirit towards a brute that had done its very best to take his own life. But no one sympathised with him at the moment,

and the punishment was continued until Mowla Buksh was thoroughly subdued and compelled by his conquerors to return to his standing-place, where he was finally and firmly secured. Thus, at last, ended this exciting and most unexpected commencement to our hunt, and the whole camp was soon after steeped in silence and repose. Not a bad beginning, eh, Junkie?"

"Yes, but go on wi' the hunt," said the boy with eager promptitude, a request which was loudly echoed by his brothers.

"No, no, boys; you've had enough to digest for one day; besides, I see the cart coming up the road to fetch our deer. And perhaps your father has more work cut out for us."

"Well, not much," replied the laird, who had been quite as much interested in the elephant story as his sons. "There is another drive on the east side of the hill, which we have still time for, though I don't expect much from it. However, we can try it. Come now, lads, we'll be going."

"Shames," said Captain McPherson, as the party moved away from the lunching-ground, "I wonder if a good thrashin' like that would make the elephant a better beast afterwards?"

"Weel now, Captain McPhairson, I don't think it would," replied McGregor after a pause for consideration.

"You are right, Shames," said Ian Anderson, the old fisherman, who was a deep-thinking man. "It has

always appeared to me, that the object of poonishment iss not to make us coot, but to make us obedient."

"Then what for are ye always poonishin' me, an' tellin' me to be coot, when ye say it won't make me coot?" asked Donald.

"Because, Tonal', it iss my duty to *tell* ye to be coot, although I cannot *make* ye coot, ye rascal!" answered the fisherman, sternly; "but I *can* make ye obey me by poonishin' you—ay, an' I wull do it too."

Donald knew too well from experience that it was not safe to attempt arguing the question, but he gave a peculiarly defiant shake of his ragged head, which said as plainly as words that the time was coming when "poonishment" would cease to secure even obedience—at least in his case!

"You are right, Ian," said Jackman, turning round, for he had overheard the conversation. "Punishment compelled Mowla Buksh to walk to his standing-place and submit to be tied up, for he did not dare to disobey with Isri Pershad and Raj Mungul standing guard over him, but it certainly did not make him good. I went, with many others, to see him the next morning. On the way over to the elephant camp, I saw the huge trees which he had smashed down in his rage lying about in all directions, and on reaching his standing-place, found him looking decidedly vicious and bad-tempered. It was quite evident that any one venturing within reach of his trunk would receive harsh treatment and no mercy. A small red spot in his great forehead showed that our Director's aim had been a

fairly good one, though it had not hit the deadly spot in the centre."

"But I want to know," said Junkie, who kept close to Jackman's side, thirsting for every word that fell from his lips, "why did the bullet not go in and kill Bowly Muksh?"

"Because the head of Mowla Buksh was too thick," said Jackman, laughing. "You see, to be a thick-head is not always a disadvantage."

"There, you ought to take comfort from that, Junkie," remarked his brother Archie, with that fine spirit of tenderness which is so often observable in brothers.

"Ha! ha! ha!" yelled Eddy, with that delicacy of feeling which is equally common.

"Hold your tongues!" growled Junkie—the more classic "shut up" not having at that time found its way to the Western Isles.

"You must know, Junkie, that all parts of an elephant's head are not of equal thickness," said Jackman in that kindly confidential tone which tends so powerfully to soothe a ruffled spirit. "The only point in an elephant's forehead that can be pierced by a rifle ball is exactly in the centre. It is about the size of a saucer, and if you miss that, you might as well fire against the Eagle Cliff itself, for the ball would only stick in the skull."

With this explanation Junkie was fain to rest content at the time, for the party had reached a part of the hill where it became necessary to station the guns

at their several posts. In regard to this drive, we have only to say that it ended in nothing except heavy rain and a severe draft on the patience of the sportsmen, without any reward, save that which may be derived from mild martyrdom.

Now, when the events which we have described were taking place on the mountains of Loch Lossie, a very different scene was occurring in the nursery of Kinlossie House. In that interesting apartment, which was one of the chief country residences of the spirits Row and Smash, little Flora was seated all alone in the afternoon of that day. Her seat was a low chair, before her was a low table to match. On the table sat her favourite doll, Blackie, to whom she was administering counsel of the gravest kind in tones the most solemn. The counsel, we need scarcely say, gave unquestionable proof that her mother's admonitions to herself had been thoroughly understood, though not always acted on. Flo was in the midst of one of her most pathetic appeals to Blackie to be "dood," when her mother entered hastily.

"Come with me, darling, to visit poor old Mrs. Donaldson. She is not very well, I hear."

Flo required no second bidding, for she was extremely fond of the keeper's mother—and love needs no persuasion.

As we have said, Mrs. Donaldson's little cottage stood behind that of her son Ivor. It was very small, consisting of only one apartment with a box bed and a few articles of old furniture, the most cherished of which

was a little clock with a staring face and a poor landscape on it.

“What caused the bruise, Maggie?” asked Mrs. Gordon, after much talk on the subject of fomentations and bandages. The old woman hesitated to tell, but after a little pressing she said, in half apologetic tone,—

“Weel, mem, it was na Ivor’s fau’t, but the day before yesterday he cam in—fou—ye ken he’s fond o’ his glass, mem, an’ he was swingin’ aboot his airms, poor falla, an’ withoot the least intention, his haund cam doon wi’ sik a ding on my heed that knockit me doon. But he kens na aboot it, so ye’ll no speak o’t to him—or to the laird.”

“You may depend upon it, poor Maggie, that I will not. My mentioning it could do no good. And, as you say, Ivor was not quite himself at the time.”

“Thank’ee, mem, that’s just it. An’ he’s the best o’ sons to me—*whan he’s sober*.”

Soon afterwards a shout outside told that the sportsmen had returned from the hills, so, bidding the old woman good-bye, Mrs. Gordon and her sympathetic child returned to the house.





CHAPTER IX.

A QUIET DAY WITH A STIRRING TERMINATION.

WHAT fisher does not know the charm, the calm delight, of a quiet day by the river side, after, it may be, months of too much contact with society? On such an occasion a congenial comrade is an advantage, but unless the comrade be congenial, one is better alone.

This may sound selfish to some ears, but is it really so? When a man has all but immolated himself, for ten or eleven months, it may be, on the altar of business, art, and social duty, is a tremendous thirst for Nature and solitude altogether selfish? We think not. And evidently MacRummle thought not, as he wandered one soft, delightful morning, rod in hand, down to the river side.

The river side! There is something restfully suggestive in the very words. The quiet pools, the gurgling deeps, the rushing rapids, the rippling shallows, the little cascades—what ardent hopes, what

wild suggestions, what grand possibilities these have for the young; what gentle excitations, what pleasant even though sad memories for the old!

Of course the non-fisher knows nothing of all this. His terrestrial joys are limited, poor thing! The painter, indeed, has some part in the matter—as regards his own line, so to speak—and when he goes on what is vulgarly termed his own hook. We have profound sympathy with the painter. But for the poor fellow who neither fishes nor paints, alas! To be sure he may botanise. Strange to say, we had almost forgotten that! and also geologise; but our concern at present is with fishers, or, rather, with that fishing enthusiast, MacRummle.

The sunshine of his face was second only to that of Nature. His visage beamed with satisfaction; his eyes gleamed with hope, as he sat down on the bank near to his first pool, and began to select flies.

We have probably given the impression that MacRummle was alone, but this is not strictly correct. In his own estimation he was, indeed, in absolute solitude, and, so far, his felicity was unbroken; but his steps had been dogged that morning, and the dogger was Junkie.

That eccentric youngster possessed a mind which it is not easy to analyse or describe. One strong element in it, however, was curiosity. Another was ambition. The blending of these two qualities produced wonder in Junkie—wonder that he, though as ardent a sportsman as MacRummle, should go forth

frequently to fish and catch little or nothing, while the old gentleman went out and was wont to return with baskets full to overflowing. There must be a secret of some sort. He did not like to ask what that secret was, so he made up his mind to follow the old man and watch him—not of course with the slightest intention of doing anything sly or wrong, but secretly, because he was well aware that MacRummle did not like to be distracted by company—especially *his* company!

Following, then, at a respectful distance, and relying for success very much on the fisher's partial blindness and deafness, Junkie went out to have a day of it. He even went so far, in the matter of forethought, as to provide himself with a massive slice of bread and cheese to sustain him while carrying on his investigations.

Before he had got far from the house, however, he encountered Donald of the ragged head, who had hung about the place in hopes of another deer-drive, and whom he styled "Tonal," in semi-sarcastic imitation of old Ian. Him he at once took into his confidence.

"I'll co wuth ye," said Donald.

"Come along, then. But mind, if you make a noise, or show yourself; if you so much as cough or sneeze, I'll punch your head an' tumble you into the river."

"Fery coot," said Donald. And upon this clear understanding they advanced.

The other members of the company at the house,

meanwhile, had scattered in various directions to fish, shoot, paint or botanise, according to fancy.

We may explain here that there were several trout-ing streams in the vicinity of the house, besides the "river" at the head of the loch. Thus it was that MacRummle had a stream all to himself.

At first the fisher tried fly, to which he was partial, but success did not attend his efforts. The water was not in the best condition for fly, being rather swollen by recent rains. Perseverance, however, was one of MacRummle's strong qualities. He was not to be easily beaten.

There was a certain big boulder about the size of a dog-cart near the mouth of the stream, which narrowed its bed considerably, and thus produced a formation of rock below water favourable to the shelter of fish. It also sent an oily ripple over the surface of the water, which was favourable to the operations of the fisher. The old gentleman seldom failed to raise or hook a good sea-trout there, and always made his first cast with eager expectation. But the fish were either obdurate or blind that morning. They could not or they would not see. With a slight, but by no means desponding, sigh, the old man changed his cast and tried again. He knew every stone and ledge of the pool, and cast again and again with consummate skill and unusual care. Still, without result.

"That's odd," he muttered, for, being naturally a sociable man, he found talking to himself an immense

relief. "Try once more, just at the tail o' yon swirl, Dick, my boy."

His Christian name was Richard. No one would have presumed to call him Dick but himself.

No result following this appeal to the tail of the swirl, he sat down on the bank and once more changed his hook. The nature of change might have been heard by the insects among the heather close by, if they were listening, for Donald whispered to his companion,—

"He's coin' to try pait!"

"Didn't I bid ye hau'd your tongue?"

"Ay."

"Do't then."

MacRummle dropped a worm gently into the head of the pool, and let it go with the current. Instantly the line straightened, the rod bent, the reel spun, and from the other side of the pool there leaped a lovely bar of silver, which fell back to its native element with a considerable splash.

"A two-pounder!" gasped Donald, unable to restrain his excitable spirit, as he half rose.

Junkie had him by the throat in a moment, and crammed his ragged head down among the heather.

"Tonal'!" he whispered remonstratively.

"I forgot," whispered Donald, when the strong little hands relaxed. "I'll not do't again."

"Ye better no'," returned Junkie, with a shake of his fist that required no explanation.

By this time the fish had darted like a lightning

flash twice up stream, once down, three times across, and twice into the air. At the same time the fisher had hurried up and down the bank, had tripped over two stumps and a root, had dropped his wideawake, and had very nearly gone head foremost into the pool; for his tackle was fine and his fish large. The fisher-boy gasped.

"Tonal'," said Junkie, in very low tones, "if ye don't behave better, I'll send ye away."

"It iss not easy, but I'll try," said he.

Donald could say no more. The best of men or boys could do no more than try. We may as well say here at once, however, that his efforts at self-control were crowned with success. He proved himself to be a great man in embryo by ruling his own spirit that day.

In a few minutes the trout was landed by means of a miniature gaff which the fisher carried in his basket for the purpose of securing fish that were too heavy to be pulled out by the line. It was afterwards found to be a two-and-a-half pounder, which, being an unusually good fish for that stream was the occasion of much rejoicing on the part of the old gentleman, as he stood wiping his forehead and commenting on it.

"Capital! Not had such a fellow as that for more than a week. There's more where that came from; but you must give the pool a rest, Dick. Try the run higher up."

In obedience to his own orders, MacRummle went up to a part of the stream where a high cliff on one side and a steepish bank on the other caused it to

flow in a deep channel, not much more than a couple of yards wide. At the head of the run was a ledge where fish were invariably captured. Towards this spot the old man hurried eagerly.

The two boys lay still in the heather, allowed him to pass, and then softly followed, bending low, and keeping as much as possible behind bushes and in hollows, until they were again close upon him. Ensconcing themselves in a convenient mass of heather, they raised their heads and saw the fisher stepping carefully from rock to rock, as he approached the run.

Rounded boulders, large or small, are never safe to walk on, even for the young and active. MacRummle found it so. His foot slipped, and he sat down, with undignified haste, in a small pool of water.

Down went the boys' heads, that they might explode their laughter as softly as possible among the roots of the heather.

"Wass it not funny?" whispered Donald.

"I hope he's not hurt," replied Junkie, raising his head cautiously.

He saw that MacRummle had risen, and, with a rueful expression of face, was making insane and futile efforts to look at himself behind. A beaming smile overspread the boy's face as he glanced at his companion, for he knew well that the old gentleman cared little or nothing for water. And this was obviously the case, for, after squeezing as much water out of his nether garments as chose to come, he proceeded to the head of the run, and resumed fishing.

“I’m beginnin’ to see through’t,” murmured Junkie, after watching for some time. “See! he has hooked another. Ye see, Tonal’, it must be lettin’ the hook drift away down under the ledges that does it. Look! He’s got ’im!”

“I’m thinking ye are right, Junkie. An’ the creat thing to know iss where the ledges lie. He keeps weel back from the watter also. There maun be some-thin’ in that, what-ē-ver. Ye wull be tryin’ it yoursel’ the morn, maype.”

To this Junkie vouchsafed no reply, for the fisher, having secured his fish, was proceeding further up stream. When he was sufficiently far in advance, the boys rose to their feet, and again followed him.

Thus the trio occupied themselves all the forenoon—MacRummle gradually filling his basket with fine sea-trout, Junkie storing his inquisitive mind with piscatorial knowledge and “dodges,” and Donald enjoying himself in the mere act of wallowing about in heather and sunshine.

About noon MacRummle suddenly ceased to gaze intently on the water, and placed his hand upon his waistcoat.

“Time, Dick?” he murmured, pulling out his watch. “I knew it. Commend me to nature. It’s the best time-keeper, after all—needs no regulating.”

He was wrong, as was frequently the case, but it mattered little, for there was no one to contradict him.

“Let me see,” he muttered, taking off his basket, and drawing a newspaper parcel from the pocket of his

coat—in which operation he was induced by memory to make a last futile attempt to see himself behind—
“what have they put up for me?”

The parcel, when opened, disclosed a tempting pile of meat sandwiches. The old gentleman spread them out on a flattish boulder, which served as an admirable table.

Having leaned his rod against a tree, he emptied the basket on a grassy spot, and arranged the silver bars in a row. Then he sat down on his basket beside the table, and gave himself up to food and contemplation.

“A goodly row,” he muttered, as well as the ham sandwich would let him. “Not a bad beginning; and such a splendid dish. There’s comfort in that, for I hate useless work of any kind. A sort of an illustration, this, of the fitness of things!”

Apparently the peculiar unfitness of simultaneous mastication and speech struck him, for he paused a few moments, then continued,—

“Yes, fitness. Supplies for the table absolutely needed. Healthy exercise a consequence. Result, felicity!”

The supplies checking speech again, MacRummle looked around him, with benignant good-will to man and beast expressed on his countenance.

Craning their necks over a bank, and seeing the old gentleman thus pleasantly engaged, the two boys sank into the heather, and disappeared from view as completely as did “Clan Alpine’s warriors true,” after they

had been shown to Fitz James by Roderick Dhu. Like two sparrows in a purple nest they proceeded to enjoy themselves.

“Now, Tonal’, we will grub,” said Junkie. “Why, what’s the matter with you?” he asked, on observing a sudden fall in his companion’s countenance.

“The matter?” repeated the boy. “It iss the crub that’s the matter, for I hev not a crumb with me.”

“Now, isn’t that awful?” said Junkie, with a hypocritically woeful look. “We will just have to starve. But there’s plenty of water,” he added, in a consoling tone. “Here, Tonal’, take this leather cup an’ fill it. Ye can git down to the river by the back o’ the bluff without bein’ noticed. See that ye make no noise, now. Mind what I said to ye.”

While Donald went at a slow, sad pace to fetch water, Junkie spread his handkerchief on the ground, and on this tablecloth laid out the following articles, which he took from a small bag that he had carried, slung on his shoulder,—a very large piece of loaf bread, a thick slice of cheese, two hard biscuits, an apple, a bit of liquorice, a mass of home-made toffee, inseparably attached to a dirty bit of newspaper, three peppermint lozenges, and a gully knife with a broken blade.

When Donald returned and beheld this feast, he opened his eyes wide. Then, opening his mouth, he was on the point of giving vent to a cheer, when Junkie stopped him with a glance and an ominous shake of the fist.

It is to this day an undecided question which of those feasters enjoyed himself most.

“I always bring with me more than I can eat, Tonal’, so you’re welcome to the half. ‘Fair play,’ as daddy says, although he sometimes keeps the fairest play to himself;” with which dutiful remark the urchin proceeded to divide the viands very justly.

It did not take long to consume the whole. But MacRummle was quicker even than they, possibly because he had enticing work still before him. The consequence was, that he had resumed his rod unnoticed by the boys, and in the process of his amusement, had reached that part of the bank on the top of which they lay concealed. Their devotion to lunch had prevented his approach being perceived, and the first intimation they had of his near presence was the clatter of pebbles as he made a false step, and the swish of his flies above their heads as he made a cast.

The boys gazed at each other for one moment in silence, then hastily stuffed the remnant of their feast into their pockets.

Suddenly the glengarry bonnet of Junkie leaped mysteriously off his head, and dropped on the heather behind him.

“Hanked again!” growled MacRummle from the river-bed below.

Every fisher knows the difficulty of casting a long line with a steep bank behind him. Once already the old gentleman had hanked on the bank a little lower

down, but so slightly that a twitch brought the flies away. Now, however, the hank was too complicated to give way to a twitch, for the glengarry held hard on to the heather. In desperate haste, Junkie, bending low, tried to extract the hook. It need scarcely be said that a hook refuses to be extracted in haste. Before he could free it, the voice of MacRummle was heard in sighs and gasps of mild exasperation as he scrambled up the bank to disentangle his line. There was no time for consideration. Junkie dropped his cap, and, rolling behind a mass of rock, squeezed himself into a crevice which was pretty well covered with pendent bracken. Donald vanished in a somewhat similar fashion, and both, remaining perfectly still, listened with palpitating hearts to MacRummle's approach.

"Well, well!" exclaimed the fisher in surprise; "it's not every day I hook a fish like this. A glengarry! And Junkie's glengarry! The small rascal! Crumbs, too! Ha! that accounts for it. He must have been having his lunch here yesterday, and was so taken up with victuals that he forgot his cap when he went away. Foolish boy! It is like his carelessness; but he's not a bad little fellow, for all that."

He chuckled audibly at this point. Junkie did the same inaudibly as he watched his old friend carefully disengage the hook; but the expression of his face changed a little when he saw his cap consigned to the fisher's pocket, as he turned and descended to the stream. Having given the fisher sufficient time to

get away from the spot, Junkie emerged from his hiding-place.

“Tonal’,” he said, in a low voice, looking round, “ye may come oot noo, man. He’s safe away.”

The ragged head, in a broad grin, emerged from a clump of bracken.

“It wass awful amusin’, Junkie, wass it not?”

“Yes, Tonal’, it was; but it won’t be very amusin’ for me to go all the rest of the day bareheaded.”

Donald sympathised with his friend on this point, and assured him that he would have divided his cap with him, as Junkie had divided his lunch, but for the fact that he never wore a cap at all, and the ragged hair would neither divide nor come off. After this they resumed their work of dogging the fisher’s steps.

It would require a volume to relate all that was said and done on that lovely afternoon, if all were faithfully detailed; but our space and the reader’s patience render it advisable to touch only on two points of interest.

As the day advanced the heat became overpowering, and, to escape from the glare of the sun for a little, the fisher took shelter under some very tall bracken on the bank near a deep pool. In order to secure a slight feeling of pleasurable expectation while resting, he put on a bait-cast, dropped the worm into the deepest part of the pool, propped up his rod with several stones, and then lay down to watch. The turf happened to be soft and level. As a natural consequence the tired man fell sound asleep.

“What’s to be done noo, Junkie?”

“ I don’t know, Tonal’.”

To make matters more exasperating, at that moment the rod began to bend and the reel to spin jerkily.

“ A fush !” exclaimed Donald.

“ Looks like it,” returned his friend drily.

“ I better gee a yell an’ wauken him,” suggested Donald.

“ Ye’d better no’,” said Junkie, shaking his fist.

“ Yonder iss the end o’ yer bonnet stickin’ oot o’ his pooch, what-ē-ver,” said Donald.

“ You’d better lie low an’ keep still,” said Junkie ; and, without further explanation of his intentions, he went softly down the bank and crept towards the sleeper, taking advantage of every stone and root and bush as he went along. Really, for a first attempt, it was worthy of the child of a Pawnee brave.

MacRummle was a heavy sleeper, so Junkie had no difficulty in recovering his cap. Putting it on, he returned the way he had come.

“ That wass cliver, man,” said the admiring Donald, when his friend rejoined him.

Junkie accepted the compliment with a dignified smile, and then sat down to wait ; but it was a severe trial of patience to both of them, for the old man slept steadily on, and even snored. He seemed, in short, to have fairly gone to bed for the night.

“ What say ye to bomb stanes at ’um ?” suggested Donald.

“ An’ kill ’im, maybe,” returned Junkie, with sarcasm in his eye.

“Heave divits at ’um, then.”

“Ay ; that’s better.”

Accordingly, the two urchins tore up a mass of turf which was much too heavy to heave.

“Let’s row’d,” suggested the active-minded Donald.

As this also met the approval of Junkie, they carried the “divit,” or mass of turf, to the bank just above the sleeper, and, taking a careful aim, let it go. The bank was not regular. A lump diverted the divit from its course, and it plunged into the pool, to the obvious discomposure of the fish, which was still at intervals tugging at the line. Another divit was tried, but with similar result. A third clod went still further astray. The bombardment then became exciting, as every kind of effort does when one begins to realise the beneficial effect of practice.

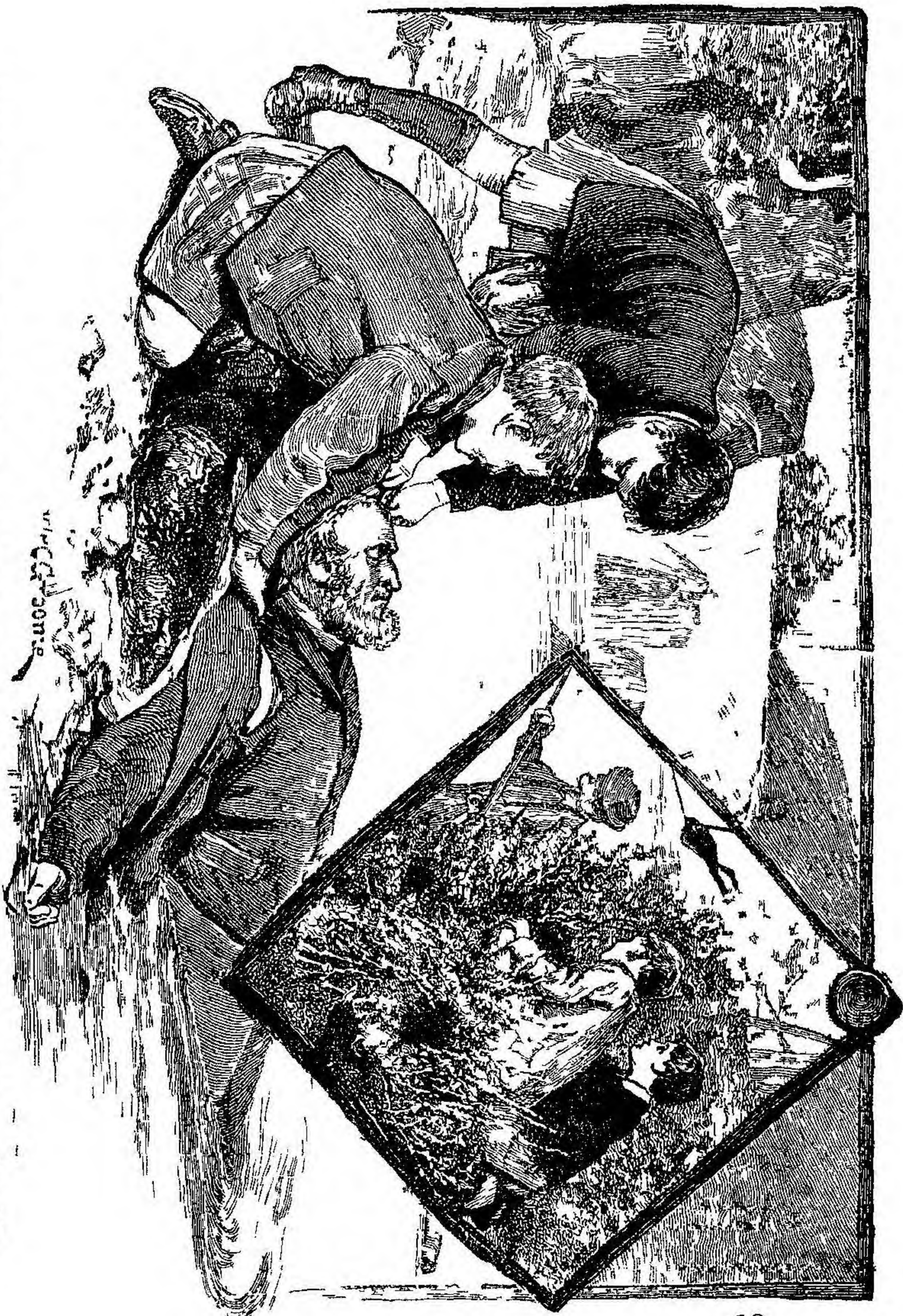
“I can see how it is,” whispered Junkie, as he carefully “laid” the next gun. “If we keep more to the right, it’ll hit that lump o’ grass, glance into the hollow, and——”

He stopped abruptly, and both boys stood in crab-like attitudes of expectation, ready to fly, for the divit took the exact course thus indicated, and bounding down the bank, hit MacRummle fair on his broad back

The guilty ones dived like rabbits into the bracken.

“Bless me !” exclaimed the old gentleman, jumping up and shaking the dry earth off. “This is most remarkable. I do believe I’ve been asleep. But why the bank should take to crumbling down upon me

"THEY SEIZED HIM BY THE HAIR AND COLLAR AND DRAGGED HIM INTO THE SHALLOW WATER." [P. 180.]



is more than I can understand. Hallo! A fish! You don't deserve such luck, Dick, my boy."

Winding in the line in a way which proved that the divit had done him no harm, he gave utterance to an exclamation of huge disgust as he drew an eel to the bank, with the line entangled hopelessly about its shiny body. This was too much for MacRummle. Unable to face the misery of disentanglement, he cut the line, despatched the eel, attached a new hook, and continued his occupation.

At the head of the pool in question the bank was so precipitous and high that the boys could see only the top of the rod swinging gracefully to and fro as the patient man pursued his sport. Suddenly the top of the rod described a wild figure in the air and disappeared. At the same moment a heavy plunge was heard.

"Hech! he's tum'led in the pool," gasped Donald.

They rushed to the overhanging edge of the cliff and looked down. Sure enough MacRummle was in the water. They expected to see him swim, for Junkie knew he was an expert swimmer; but the poor man was floating quietly down with the current, his head under water.

"Banged his heed, what-ē-ver!" cried Donald, jumping up and bounding down the bank to the lower and shallow end of the pool. Quick though he was, Junkie outran him; but the unfortunate MacRummle was unintentionally quicker than either, for they found him stranded when they got there.

Running into the water, they seized him by the hair and the collar of his coat, and dragged him into the shallow part easily enough, but they had not strength to haul him ashore.

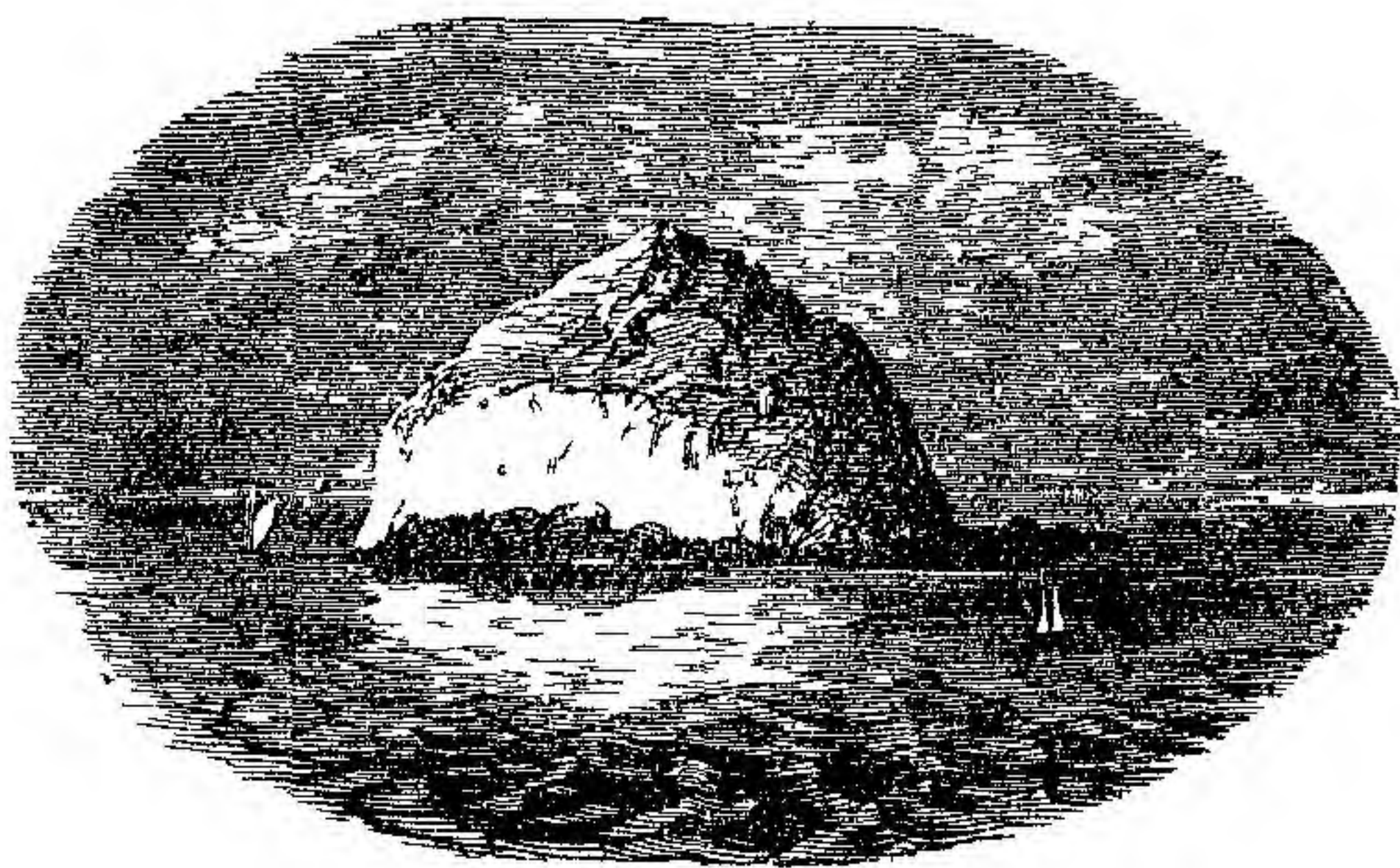
“Fetch a divit, Tonal’—a big one, an’ I’ll keep up his head.”

One of the masses of recent artillery was fetched, and the fisher’s head was gently pillowed on it, so as to be well out of the water.

“There’s no cut that I can see,” said Junkie, inspecting the head critically; “he’s only stunned, I think. Noo, Tonal’, cut away to the hoose. Run as ye never ran before and tell them. I’ll stop beside him for fear his heed slips in again.”

Donald went off like a shot. Junkie went a few steps with him, intending to fetch another divit. Looking back, he saw what made him sink into the heather, and give a low whistle. Donald heard it, stopped, and also hid himself, for MacRummle was seen trying to rise. He succeeded, and staggered to dry land, when, sitting down on a stone, he felt himself all over with an anxious expression. Then he felt a lump on the back of his head, and smiled intelligently. After that he squeezed as much water out of his garments as he could, quietly took down his rod, ascertained that the fish in his basket were all right, then looked with some perplexity at the big divit lying in the shallow close to where he stood, and finally, with a highly contented expression of countenance, wended his way homeward.

The two boys gave him time to get well out of sight in advance, and then followed his example, commenting sagely as they went on the desirability of possessing pluck in old age, and on the value of the various lessons they had learned that day.





CHAPTER X.

A WILDISH CHAPTER.

IT was the habit of our three friends—Bob Mabberly, John Barret, and Giles Jackman—during their residence at Kinlossie, to take a stroll together every morning before breakfast by the margin of the sea, for they were fond of each other's company, and Mabberly, as a yachtsman, had acquired the habit of early rising. He had also learned to appreciate the early morning hours as being those which present Nature in her sweetest as well as her freshest aspect—when everything seems, more than at other periods of the day, to be under the direct influence of a benignant Creator.

It was also the habit of Captain McPherson and his man, James McGregor, to indulge daily in similar exercise at about the same hour, but, owing probably to their lives having been spent chiefly on the sea, they were wont to ramble up a neighbouring glen in preference to sauntering on the shore.

One bright calm morning, however, when the sky was all blue and the loch was like a mirror, the two seamen took it into their heads to desert the glen and ramble along the shore. Thus it came to pass that, on returning homeward, they encountered our three friends.

“It iss fery strange that we should foregather this mornin’, Mr. Mabberly,” said the skipper, after greeting the young men; “for Shames an’ me was jist speakin’ aboot ye. We will be thinkin’ that it iss foolishness for hum an’ me to be stoppin’ here wastin’ our time when we ought to be at oor work.”

“Nonsense, Captain,” said Mabberly; “surely you don’t think that taking a holiday in a pleasant place like this is wasting time. Besides, I don’t consider you free from your engagement to me. You were hired for the trip, and that includes land as well as water, so I won’t give you your discharge till you have had a long rest and recruited yourselves after the shock to your nervous systems occasioned by the wreck and the swim to shore!”

A grim smile played on the skipper’s iron features when reference was made to his nerves, and a flicker of some sort illumined the wooden visage of McGregor.

“You are fery kind, sir,” returned the skipper; “but we don’t like to be receivin’ pay for doin’ nothin’. You see, neither Shames nor me cares much for fushin’ in the burns, or goin’ after the deer, an’ there’s no chance o’ raisin’ the yat from the pottom o’ the sea, so, if you hev no objection, sir, we will be goin’ by the

steamer that arrives to-morrow. I thought I would speak to you to-day, for we will hev to start early in the mornin', before you're up, for it iss a long way we'll hev to go. Iss it not so, Shames?"

"Oo, ay," replied the seaman, with more than ever of the nasal twang; "it iss a coot many miles to where the poat comes in—so the poy Tonal' wass tellin' me, what-ē-ver."

Mabberly tried to persuade the men to remain a little longer, but they were obdurate, so he let them go, knowing well that his father, who was a wealthy merchant and shipowner, would see to the interests of the men who had suffered in his son's service.

As they retraced their steps to the house the skipper gave Giles Jackman some significant glances which induced him to fall behind the others.

"You want to speak with me privately, I think, skipper?"

"Yes, sir, I do," replied the seaman, with some embarrassment. "But it iss not fery easy nor pleasant to do so. A man does not like to speak of another man's failin's, you see, but as I am goin' away I'm obleeged to do it. You will hev noticed, sir, that Ivor Tonalson iss raither fond of his tram?"

"I'm afraid that I have observed that—poor fellow."

"He is a goot man, sir, is Tonalson—a fery goot man—when he iss sober, but he hes got no power to resist the tram. An' whiles he goes on the spree, an' then he gits wild wi' D.T. you know, sir. Noo, ever since we cam' here, Ivor an' me hes been great friends,

an' it hes been heavy on my mind to see him like that, for he's a fine man, a superior person, is Ivor, if he would only let alone the whusky. So I hev spoken to him wance or twice—serious like, you know. At first he was not pleased, but the last time I spoke, he took it kindly, an' said he would think aboot what I had been sayin'. Noo, it's heavy on me the thoucht o' goin' away an' leavin' him in that state, so I thought that maybe ye would tak the metter up, sir, an' see what ye can do wi' him. Git him, if ye can, to become a total abstainer, for nothin' less than that wull do wi' a man in that condeetion."

Jackman was greatly surprised, not only at the tenor of the skipper's remarks, but at the evidently deep feeling with which he spoke, for up to that time the reticence and quiet coolness of the man had inclined him to think that his mind and feelings were in harmony with his rugged and sluggish exterior. It was, therefore, with something of warmth that he replied,—

"I shall be only too happy to do as you wish, Captain; all the more that I have had some serious thoughts and feelings in that direction. Indeed, I have made up my mind, as it happens, to speak to Ivor on that very subject, not knowing that you were already in the field. I am particularly sorry for his poor old mother, who has suffered a great deal, both mentally and physically, on his account."

"Ay, that's the warst o' it," said the skipper. "It wass the sicht o' the poor wumin ailin' in body an' broken heartit that first set me at Ivor."

“But how comes it, Captain, that you plead so earnestly for *total* abstinence?” asked Jackman with a smile. “Have I not heard you defend the idea of moderate drinking, although you consented to sail in a teetotal yacht?”

“Mr. Jackman,” said the skipper, with almost stern solemnity, “it iss all fery weel for men to speak aboot moderate drinkin’, when their feelin’s iss easy an’ their intellec’s iss confused wi’ theories an’ fancies, but men will change their tune when it iss brought home to themselves. Let a man only see his brither or his mither, or his faither, on the high road to destruction wi’ drink, an’ he’ll change his opeenion aboot moderate drinkin’—at least for hard drinkers—ay, an’ he’ll change his practice too, unless he iss ower auld, or his stamick, like Timothy’s, canna git on withoot it. An’ that minds me that I would tak it kind if ye would write an’ tell me how he gets on, for I hev promised to become a total abstainer if *he* wull.”

That very afternoon, while out shooting on the hills, Jackman opened the campaign by making some delicate approaches to the keeper on the subject, in a general and indirect way, but with what success he could not tell, for Ivor was respectfully reserved.

About the same time John Barret went off alone for a saunter in one of the nearest and most picturesque of the neighbouring glens. He had declined to accompany his comrades that day, for reasons best known to himself. After writing a few letters, to keep up appearances, and to prevent his being regarded as a

mere idler, he went off, as we have said, to saunter in the glen.

He had not sauntered far when he came upon a sight which is calculated, whenever seen, to arouse sentiments of interest in the most callous beholder—a young lady painting! It would be wrong to say he was surprised, but he was decidedly pleased, to judge from the expression of his handsome face. He knew who the lady was, for by that time he had studied the face and figure of Milly Moss until they had been indelibly photographed on his—well, on the sensitive-plate of his soul, wherever that lay.

Milly had quite recovered from her accident by that time, and had resumed her favourite pursuits.

“I’m very glad to have caught you at work at last, Miss Moss,” he said, on coming up to the picturesque spot on which her easel was erected. “I wish much to receive that lesson which you so kindly promised to give me.”

“I thought it was just the other way. Did you not say that you would teach me some of those perplexing rules of perspective which my book lays down so elaborately—and, to me, so incomprehensibly?”

“I did, but did not you promise to show me how to manipulate oils—in regard to which I know absolutely nothing? And as practice is of greater importance than theory, you must be the teacher and I the pupil.”

Upon this point they carried on a discussion until Milly, declaring she was wasting her time and losing the effects of light and shade, went seriously to work

on the canvas before her. Barret, whose natural colour was somewhat heightened, stood at a respectful distance looking on.

“You are quite sure, I hope,” said the youth, “that it does not disturb you to be overlooked? You know I would not presume to do so if you had not promised to permit me. My great desire, for many a day, has been to observe the process of painting in oils by one who understands it.”

How he reconciled this statement with the fact that he was not looking at the picture at all, but at the little white hand that was deftly applying the brush, and the beautiful little head that was moving itself so gracefully about while contemplating the work, is more than we can explain.

Soon the painter became still more deeply absorbed in her work, and the pupil more deeply still in the painter. It was a magnificent sweep of landscape that lay before them—a glen glowing with purple and green, alive with flickering sunlight and shadow, with richest browns and reds and coolest greys in the foreground; precipices, crags, verdant slopes of bracken, pine and birch woods hanging on the hillsides, in the middle distance, and blue mountains mingling with orange skies in the background, with MacRummle’s favourite stream appearing here and there like a silver thread, running through it all. But Barret saw nothing of it. He only saw a pretty hand, a blushing cheek and sunny hair!

The picture was not bad. There was a good deal of

crude colour in the foreground, no doubt, without much indication of form; and there was also some wonderfully vivid green and purple, with impossible forms and amazing perspective—both linear and aërial—in places, and Turner-esque confusion of yellow in the extreme distance. But Barret did not note that—though by means of some occult powers of comprehension he commented on it freely! He saw nothing but Milly Moss.

It was a glorious chance. He resolved to make the most of it.

“I had no idea that painting in oils was such a fascinating occupation,” he remarked, without feeling quite sure of what he said.

“I delight in it,” returned the painter, slowly, as she touched in a distant sheep, which—measured by the rules of perspective, and regard being had to surrounding objects—might have stood for an average cathedral.

Milly did not paint as freely as usual that afternoon. There was something queer, she said, about the brushes. “I *can’t* get it to look right,” she said at last, wiping out an object for the third time and trying again.

“No doubt,” murmured the youth, “a cottage like that must be difficult to——”

“Cottage!” exclaimed Milly, laughing outright; “it is not a cottage at all; it’s a cow! Oh! Mr. Barret, that is a very poor compliment to my work and to your own powers of discernment.”

“Nay, Miss Moss,” retorted the pupil, in some confusion, “but you have wiped it out twice, confessing, as you did so, that you could not paint it! Besides, my remark referred to the cottage which I *thought* you were going to paint—not to your unsuccessful representations of the cow.”

The poor youth felt that his explanation was so lame that he was somewhat relieved when the current of their thoughts was diverted by a loud shouting in the road farther down the glen. A shade of annoyance, however, rested for a moment on the face of his companion, for she recognised the voices, and knew well that the quiet *tête-à-tête* with her willing and intelligent pupil must now be interrupted.

“My cousins,” she remarked, putting a touch on the cow that stamped that animal a *lusus naturæ* for all time coming.

Another whoop told that the cousins were drawing near. In a few minutes they appeared in the path emerging from a clump of hazel bushes.

“They are evidently bent on a photographic expedition,” remarked Barret, as the boys approached, Junkie waving his hat with hilarious good-will when he discovered the painters.

“And Flo is with them,” said Milly, “from which I conclude that they are having what Junkie calls a day of it; for whenever they are allowed to take Flo, they go in for a high holiday, carrying provisions with them, so as to be able to stay out from morning till night.”

The appearance of the young revellers fully bore out Milly's statement, for they were all more or less burdened with the means or signs of enjoyment. Archie carried his box of dry plates in his left hand, and his camera and stand over his right shoulder; Eddy bore a colour-box and sketching-book; Junkie wielded a small fishing-rod and had a fishing-basket on his back; and Flo was encircled with daisy chains and crowned with laurel and heather, besides which, each of the boys had a small bag of provisions slung on his shoulder.

"Hooray ! hooray !
Out for the day !"

sang, or rather yelled, Junkie as he approached.

"Ramble and roam—
Never go home !"

added Archie, setting down his camera and beginning to arrange it.

"All of us must
Eat till we bust !"

Junkie taught me zat," said innocent Flo, with a look of grave surprise at the peals of laughter which her couplet drew from her brothers.

"Yes, that's what we're goin' to do," said Junkie; "we've had lunch at the foot of Eagle Glen, and noo we are going up to Glen Orrack to dine, and fish, an' paint, an' botanise. After that we'll cross over the Swan's Neck, an' finish off the bustin' business with supper on the sea-shore. Lots of grub left yet, you see."

He swung round his little wallet as he spoke, and held it up to view.

“Would you like some, Cousin Milly?” asked Eddy, opening his bag. “All sorts here. Bread, cheese, ginger snaps, biscuits, jam—— Oh! I say, the jam-pot’s broken! Whatever shall we do?”

He dipped his fingers into his wallet as he spoke, and brought them out magenta!

Their hilarity was dissipated suddenly, and grave looks were bestowed on Eddy’s digits until Flo’s little voice arose like a strain of sweet music to dissipate the clouds.

“Oh! never mind,” she said; “I’s got anuzzer pot in my bag!”

This had been forgotten. The fact was verified by swift examination, and felicity was restored.

“What are you going to photograph?” asked Milly, seeing that Archie was busy making arrangements.

“*You*, Cousin Milly. You’ve no notion what a splendid couple you and Mr. Barret look—stuck up so picturesquely on that little mound, with its rich foreground of bracken and the grey rock beside you, and the peep through the bushes, with Big Ben for a background; and the easel, too—so suggestive! There, now, I’m ready. By the way, I might take you as a pair of lovers!”

Poor Milly became scarlet, and suddenly devoted herself to the *lusus naturæ*! Barret took refuge in a loud laugh, and then said, “Really, one would suppose



“MR. BARRETT WILL STAND BEHIND ME, LOOKING EARNESTLY AT THE PICTURE —”

that you were a professional, Archie; you order your sitters about with such self-satisfied presumption——”

“Yes, they always do that,” said Milly, recovering herself, and looking calmly up from the cow—which now resembled a megatherium——“but you must remember, Cousin Archie, that I am a *painter*, and therefore understand about attitudes and all that much better than a mere photographer. So, if I condescend to sit, you must take your orders from *me*!”

“Fire away then with your orders,” cried the impatient amateur.

“See, sir, I will sit thus—as if painting,” said Milly, who was desperately anxious to have it over, lest Archie should make some awkward proposition. “Mr. Barret will stand behind me, looking earnestly at the picture——”

“Admiringly,” interposed Barret.

“Not so—earnestly, as if getting a lesson,” said Milly, with a teacher’s severity; “and Flo will sit thus, at my feet, taking care (hold it, dear,) of my palette.”

“More likely to make a mess of it,” said Junkie.

“Now, are you ready? Steady! Don’t budge a finger,” cried Archie, removing the little leather cap.

In her uncertainty as to which of her fingers she was not to budge, Flo nervously moved them all.

“You’re movin’, Flo!” whispered Junkie.

“No, I’m not,” said Flo, looking round indignantly.

“There, I knew you couldn’t hold your tongue, Junkie,” cried the photographer, hastily replacing the

cap. "However, I think I had it done before she moved."

"And look—you've got the nigger in!" cried Junkie, snatching up the black doll, which had been lying unobserved on its owner's knee all the time.

"Never mind, that'll do no harm. Now, then, soldiers, form up, an' quick march," said Archie, closing up his apparatus. "We have got plenty of work before us, and no time to waste."

Obedient to this rather inaccurately given word of command, Archie's troops fell into line, and, with a whooping farewell, continued their march up the glen.

During the remainder of that beautiful afternoon, the artist and pupil continued at their "fascinating" work. Shall we take advantage of our knowledge to lift the curtain and tell in detail how Milly introduced a few more megatheriums into her painting, and violated nearly all the rules of perspective, to say nothing of colour and chiaro-oscuro? Shall we reveal the multitude of absurd remarks made by the pupil in his wild attempts at criticism of an art about which he knew next to nothing? No; it would be unwarrantable—base! Merely remarking that painter and pupil were exceedingly happy, and that they made no advance whatever in the art of painting, we turn to another scene in the neighbourhood of Kinlossie House.

It was a wide grass-field from which the haycocks had recently been removed, leaving it bare and unin-

teresting. Nevertheless, there were two points of interest in that field which merit special attention. One was a small black bull, with magnificent horns, the shaggiest of coats, and the wickedest of eyes. The other was our friend MacRummle, taking a short cut through the field, with a basket on his back, a rod in one hand, and an umbrella in the other.

We may at once account for the strange presence of the latter article, by explaining that on the day before—which was rainy—the laird had with an umbrella accompanied his friend to his first pool in the river, at which point their roads diverged; that he had stayed to see MacRummle make his first two or three casts, during which time the sky cleared, inducing the laird to close his umbrella and lean it against the bank, after which he went away and forgot it. Returning home the next day our angler found and took charge of it.

That he had been successful that day was made plain, not only by the extra stoop forward, which was rendered necessary by the weight of his basket, and the beaming satisfaction on his face, but by the protruding tail of a grilse which was too large to find room for the whole of itself inside.

“You’re a lucky man to-day, Dick,” murmured the enthusiastic angler to himself, as he jogged across the field.

Had he known what was in store for him, however, he would have arrived at a very different estimate of his fortunes!

The field, as we have said, was a large one. MacRummle had reached the centre of it when the black bull, standing beside the wall at its most distant corner, seemed to feel resentment at this trespass on its domain.

It suddenly bellowed in that low thunderous tone which is so awfully suggestive of conscious power. MacRummle stopped short. He was naturally a brave man, nevertheless his heart gave his ribs an unwonted thump when he observed the bull in the distance glaring at him. He looked round in alarm. Nothing but an unbroken flat for a hundred yards lay around him in all directions, unrelieved by bush, rock, or tree, and bounded by a five-foot wall, with only one gate, near to where the bull stood pawing the earth and apparently working itself into a rage.

“Now, Dick,” murmured the old gentleman, seriously, “it’s do or die with you if that brute charges, for your legs are not much better than pipestems, and your wind is—— Eh ! he comes !”

Turning sharply, he caused the pipestems to wag with amazing velocity—too fast, indeed, for his toe catching on something sent him violently to the ground, and the basket flew over his head with such force that the strap gave way. He sprang up instantly, still unconsciously holding on to rod and umbrella.

Meanwhile, the bull, having made up its mind, came charging down the field with its eyes flashing and its tail on high.

MacRummle looked back. He saw that the case

was hopeless. He was already exhausted and gasping. A young man could scarcely have reached the wall in time. Suddenly he came to a ditch, one of those narrow open drains with which inhabitants of wet countries are familiar. The sight of it shot a blaze of hope through his despair! He stopped at once, dropped his rod, and, putting up his umbrella, laid it on the ground. It was a large cotton one of the Gamp description. Under the shelter of it he stepped quietly into the ditch, which was not much more than knee deep, with very little water in it.

Placing the umbrella in such a position that it came between himself and the bull, he laid himself flat down in the drain. The opening was far too narrow to admit his broad shoulders, except when turned sidewise. The same treatment was not applicable to other parts of his person, but by dint of squeezing and collapsing he got down, nestled under the bank, and lay still.

On came the bull till it reached the basket, which, with a deft toss, it hurled into the air and sent the silvery treasure flying. A moment more and it went head foremost into the umbrella. Whether it was surprised at finding its enemy so light and unsubstantial, or at the slipping of one of its feet into the drain, we cannot tell, but the result was that it came down and turned a complete somersault over the drain, carrying the umbrella along with it in its mad career!

When the bull scrambled to its feet again, and looked round in some surprise, it found that one of its

legs and both its horns were through and entangled with the wrecked article.

It was a fine sight to witness the furious battle that immediately ensued between the black bull and that cotton umbrella! Rage at the man was evidently transmuted into horror at the article. The bull pranced and shook its head and pawed about in vain efforts to get rid of its tormenter. Shreds of the wreck flapped wildly in its eyes. Spider-like ribs clung to its massive limbs and poked its reeking sides, while the swaying handle kept tapping its cheeks and ears and nose, as if taunting the creature with being held and badgered by a thing so flimsy and insignificant!

Happily this stirring incident was not altogether unwitnessed. Far up the valley it was observed by four living creatures, three of whom immediately came tearing down the road at racing speed. Gradually their different powers separated them from each other. Archie came first, Eddy next, and Junkie brought up the rear. On nearing the field the first wrenched a stake out of a fence; the second caught up a rake, that had been left by the haymakers; and the last, unscrewing the butt of his rod, broke the line, and flourished the weapon as a cudgel. They all three leaped into the field one after another, and bore courageously down on the bull, being well accustomed to deal with animals of the sort.

Separating as they drew near, they attacked him on three sides at once. Short work would he have made with any of them singly; together they were more

than his match. When he charged Junkie, Archie ran in and brought the stake down on his skull. When he turned on his assailant, Eddy combed his sides with the rake. Dashing at the new foe he was caught by the tail by Junkie, who applied the butt of his rod vigorously, the reel adding considerable weight to his blows. At last the bull was cowed—if we may venture to say so—and driven ignominiously into a corner of the field, where he vented his rage on the remnants of the umbrella, while the victors returned to the field of battle.

“But what’s come of MacRummle?” said the panting Junkie as they gathered up the fish and replaced them in the basket. “I never saw him get over the wall. Did you?”

“No,” replied Archie, looking round in surprise.

“I dare say he ran off while we were thumpin’ the bull,” suggested Eddy.

“I’m here, boys! I’m here, Junkie,” cried a strange sepulchral voice, as if from the bowels of the earth.

“Where?” asked the boys gazing down at their feet with expressions of awe.

“He’s i’ the drain!” cried Junkie with an expanding mouth.

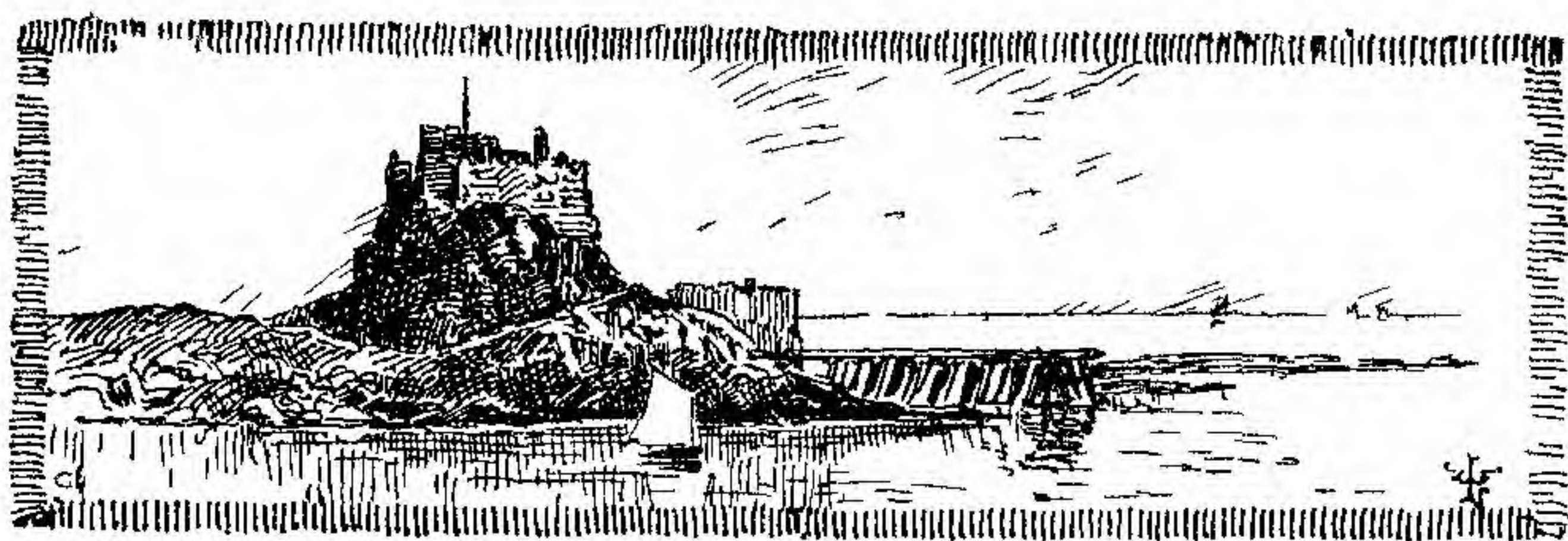
“Ay—that’s it! I’m in the drain! Lend a hand, boys; I can hardly move.”

They ran to him instantly, but it required the united powers of all three to get him out, and when they succeeded he was found to be coated all over one side with thick mud.

“What a muddle you’ve made of yourself, to be sure!” exclaimed Junkie. “Let me scrape you.”

But MacRummle refused to be scraped until they had placed the five-foot wall between himself and the black bull. Then he submitted with a profound sigh.





CHAPTER XI.

PECULIAR INCIDENTS OF A SABBATH AMONG THE WESTERN ISLES.

ONE beautiful Sunday morning while the party assembled in Kinlossie House was at breakfast, a message was brought to the laird that he “wass wantit to speak wi’ the poy Tonal’.”

“Well, Donald, my lad, what want ye with me this fine morning?” asked the laird, on going out to the hall.

“I wass telt to tell ye the’ll be no kirk the day, for the minister’s got to preach at Drumquaich.”

“Very well, Donald. Have you had breakfast?”

“Oo, ay.”

“Go into the kitchen, then, and they will give you some more.”

“Thenkee, sir.”

“I find,” said the laird on returning to his friends, “that we are to have no service to-day in our little

church, as our minister has to take the duty at Drumquaich, on the other side of the loch. So those of you who are bent on going to church must make up your minds to cross the loch in the boat."

"Is Drumquaich the little village close under the pine wood, that we see on doubling Eagle Point?" asked Mabberly.

"The same. The little church there, like our own, is not supplied regularly. Sometimes a Divinity student is sent down to them. Occasionally they have a great gun from Edinburgh."

"I think some of the students are better than the great guns," remarked Mrs. Gordon quietly.

"True, my dear, and that is most natural, for it stands to reason that some at least of the students must be the great guns of the future in embryo; and they have the freshness of youth to set against the weight of erudition."

"The student who preached to us here last Sunday," observed Barret, "must surely be an embryo great gun, for he treated his subject in a learned and masterly way that amazed me. From the look of him I would not have expected even an average discourse."

"That was partly owing to his modest air and reticence," returned the laird. "If you heard him converse on what he would call metaphysical subjects, you would perhaps have been still more surprised."

"Well, I hope he will preach to-day," said Barret.

“From which I conclude that you will be one of the boat party. My wife and Milly make three, myself four ; who else ? ”

“No—don’t count me,” interrupted the hostess ; “I must stay with Flo ; besides, I must visit poor Mrs. Donaldson, who is again laid up. But I’ll be glad if you will take Aggy Anderson. Ever since the poor girl came here for a little change of air she has been longing to go out in the boat. I really believe it is a natural craving for the free, fresh breezes of the sea. May she go ? ”

“By all means ; as many as the boat will hold,” returned the laird.

It was finally arranged that besides those already mentioned, Mabberly, Jackman, MacRummle, Quin, the three boys, Roderick the groom, and Ian Anderson, as boatman in charge, should cross over to the little church at Drumquaich, about eight miles distant by water.

While they were getting ready, Mrs. Gordon and Flo, with the beloved black dolly, paid a visit to old Molly, the keeper’s mother. They found her in her arm-chair, sitting by the large, open chimney, on the hearth of which a very small fire was burning—not for the sake of warmth, but for the boiling of an iron pot which hung over it.

The old woman was enveloped in a large, warm shawl—a gift from the “Hoose.” She also wore a close-fitting white cap, or “mutch,” which was secured to her head by a broad, black ribbon. The rims of her

spectacles were of tortoiseshell, and she had a huge family Bible on her knee, while her feet rested upon a three-legged stool. She looked up inquiringly as her visitors entered.

“Why, Molly, I thought you were in bed. They told me you were ill.”

“Na, mem, I’m weel eneuch in body; it’s the speerit that’s ill. And ye ken why.”

She spoke in a faint, quavering voice, for her old heart had been crushed by her wayward, self-indulgent son, and a few tears rolled down her wrinkled cheeks; but she was too old and feeble to give way to demonstrative grief. Little Flo, whose heart was easily touched, went close to the poor old woman and looked up anxiously in her face.

“My bonny doo! It’s a pleasure to look at ye,” said the old woman, laying her hand on the child’s head.

Mrs. Gordon drew in a chair and sat down by her side.

“Tell me about it,” she said confidentially; “has he given way again, after all his promises to Mr. Jackman?”

“Oo, ay; Maister Jackman’s a fine man, but he canna change the hert o’ my son—though it is kind o’ him to try. No, the only consolation I hev is here.”

She laid her hand on the open Bible.

“Where is he just now?” asked the lady.

As she spoke, a fierce yell was heard issuing from the keeper's cottage, which, as we have said, stood close to his mother's abode.

"Ye hear till 'im," said the old woman with a sorrowful shake of the head. "He iss fery pad the day. Whiles he thinks that horrible craters are crawlin' ower him, an' whiles that fearful bogles are glowerin' at him. Sometimes he fancies that the foul fiend himsel' has gotten haud o' him, an' then he screeches as ye hear."

"Would it do any good, Molly, if I were to go and speak to him, think you?"

"Na, ye'd better let him lie. He's no' hissel' the now, and there's no sayin' what he might do. Oh! drink! drink!" cried the old creature, clasping her hands; "ye took my man awa', an' now ye're ruinin' my son! But," she added with sudden animation, "we can pray for him; though it iss not possible for you or Maister Jackman to change my bairn's hert, the Lord can do it, for wi' Him 'a' things are possible.'"

To this Mrs. Gordon gave a hearty assent. Sitting still as she was, with hand resting on the old woman's arm, she shut her eyes and prayed fervently for the salvation of the enslaved man.

She was still engaged in this act of worship when another shriek was heard. At the same time the door of the keeper's cottage was heard to open, and Ivor's feet were heard staggering towards his mother's cottage. Poor Flo took refuge in great alarm behind Mrs.

Donaldson, while her mother, rising quickly, drew back a few paces.

Next moment the small door was burst open, and the keeper plunged, almost fell, into the room with something like a savage cheer. He was a terrible sight. With wildly dishevelled hair, bloodshot eyes, and distorted features, he stood for a few seconds glaring at his mother, his tall figure swaying to and fro, while he held a quart bottle aloft in his right hand. He did not appear to observe the visitors, but continued to stare at his mother with an expression that perplexed her, accustomed though she was to his various moods.

“See, mother,” he shouted fiercely, “I have done wi’ the accursed thing at last!”

He dashed the bottle on the hearth with tremendous violence as he spoke, so that it vanished into minute fragments, while its contents spurted about in all directions. Happily very little of it went into the fire, else the cottage would have been set ablaze.

With another wild laugh the man wheeled round, staggered out of the cottage, and went his way.

“You are not hurt, I trust?” said the lady, anxiously bending down over the poor old creature, who had remained calmly seated in her chair, without the slightest appearance of alarm.

“No, I’m not hurt, thank the Lord,” she answered.

“Don’t you think that that was an answer to our prayer?” asked the lady with some eagerness.

Old Molly shook her head dubiously. "It may be so," she replied; "but I hev often seen 'im i' that mind, and he has gone back to it again and again, like the soo that was washed to her wallowin' i' the mire. Yet there did seem somethin' different aboot 'im the day," she added thoughtfully; "but it iss not the first time I hev prayed for him without gettin' an answer."

"Answers do not always come as we expect them," returned her visitor; "yet they may be granted even while we are asking. I don't know how it is, but I eel sure that Jesus will save your son."

Poor little Flo, who had been deeply affected by the terrible appearance of her favourite Ivor, and who had never seen him in such a plight before, quietly slipped out of old Molly's hut and went straight to that of the keeper. She found him seated on a chair with his elbows on his knees, his forehead resting on his hands, and his strong fingers grasping his hair as if about to tear it out by the roots. Flo, who was naturally fearless and trustful, ran straight to him and placed a hand on his shoulder. He started and looked round.

"Bairn! bairn!" he said grasping her little head and kissing her forehead, "what brings ye here?"

"Muzzer says she is *sure* Jesus will save you; so I came to tell you, for muzzer *never* says what's not true."

Having delivered her consoling message, Flo ran back at once to Molly's cottage with the cheerful

remark that it was all right now, for she had told Ivor that he was going to be saved!

While Mrs. Gordon and Flo were thus engaged on shore, the boat party were rowing swiftly down the loch to the little hamlet of Drumquaich. The weather was magnificent. Not a breath of air stirred the surface of the sea, so that every little white cloud in the sky was perfectly reproduced in the concave below. The gulls that floated on the white expanse seemed each to be resting on its own inverted image, and the boat would have appeared in similar aspect but for the shivering of the mirror by its oars.

"Most appropriate type of Sabbath rest," said Jackman.

"Ay, but like all things here pelow," remarked Ian Anderson, who possessed in a high degree the faculty of disputation, "it's not likely to lest long."

"What makes you think so, Ian?" asked Milly, who sat in the stern of the boat between John Barret and Aggy Anderson.

"Well, you see, muss," began Ian, in his slow, nasal tone, "the gless has bin fallin' for some time past, an' —Tonal', poy, mind your helm; see where you're steerin' to!"

Donald, who steered, was watching with profound interest the operations of Junkie, who had slily and gravely fastened a piece of twine to a back button of MacRummle's coat and tied him to the thwart on which he sat. Being thus sternly asked where he was

steering to, Donald replied, "Oo, ay," and quickly corrected the course.

"But surely," returned Milly, "there is no sign of a rapid change, at least if we may judge from the aspect of Nature; and I am a fervent believer in Nature, whatever the glass may predict."

"I am not sure o' that, muss," said Ian. "You needn't pull quite so hard, Muster Mabberly; we hev plenty o' time. Tak it easy. Well, as I wass sayin', muss, I hev seen it as calm as this i' the mornin' mony a time, an' plowin' a gale at nicht."

"Let us hope that that won't be our experience to-day," said the laird. "Anyhow, we have a good sea-boat under us."

"Weel, the poat's no' a pad wan, laird, but I hev seen petter. You see, when the wund iss richt astern, she iss given to trinkin'."

"That's like Ivor," said Junkie with a laugh; "only *he* is given to drinkin', no matter how the wind blows."

"What do you mean?" asked Milly, much perplexed.

Barret here explained that a boat which takes in much water over the bow is said to be given to drinking.

"I'm inclined that way myself," said Jackman, who had been pulling hard at one of the oars up to that time.

"Has any one thought of bringing a bottle of water?"

"Here's a bottle," cried MacRummle, laughing.

"Ah, sure, an' there seems to be a bottle o' milk, or somethin' white under the th'ort," remarked Quin, who pulled the bow oar.

"But that's Milly's bottle of milk," shouted Junkie.

"And Aggy's," chimed in Eddy.

"Yes—no one must touch that," said Junkie.

"Quite right, boys," said Jackman; "besides, milk is not good for quenching thirst."

On search being made, it was found that water had not been brought with them, so that the thirsty rowers had to rest content without it.

"Is that Eagle Cliff I see, just over the knoll there?" asked Barret.

"It is," answered the laird; "don't you see the eagle himself like a black speck hovering above it? My shepherd would gladly see the bird killed, for he and his wife make sad havoc among the lambs sometimes; but I can't say that I sympathise with the shepherd. An eagle is a noble bird, and there are none too many of them now in this country."

"I agree with you heartily," said Barret; "and I would regard the man who should kill that eagle as little better than a murderer."

"*Quite* as bad as a murderer!" said Milly with energy. "I am glad you speak out so clearly, Mr. Barret; for I fear there are some among us who would not hesitate to shoot if the poor bird were to come within range."

"Pray don't look so pointedly at me, Miss Moss,"

said Jackman ; “ I assure you I have no intention of attempting murder—at least not in that direction.”

“ Och ! an’ it’s murder enough you’ve done already for wan man,” said Quin in an undertone.

“ Oh ! I say, that reminds me. Do tell us the rest of the story of the elephant hunt, Mr. Jackman,” cried Junkie.

“ Not just now, my boy. It’s a long story. Besides, we are on our way to church ! Some other time I will tell it you.”

“ It would take half the romance away from my mother’s visit if the eagle were killed,” remarked Milly, who did not overhear the elephant parenthesis.

“ Has your mother, then, decided to come ? ” asked Barret.

“ Yes. In spite of the sea, which she dreads, and steamers, which she hates, she has made up her mind to come and take me home.”

“ How charming that will be ! ” said Barret.

“ Indeed ! ” returned Milly, with a significant look and smile.

“ Of *course* I did not mean *that*,” returned Barret, laughing. “ I meant that it would be charming for you to have your mother out here, and to return home in her company. Is she likely to stay long ? ”

“ I cannot tell. That depends on so many things. But I am sure of one thing, that she longs to see and thank you for the great service you rendered me on the day of your arrival here.”

Barret began to protest that the service was a comparatively small one, and such as any man might gladly render to any one, when the arrival of the boat at the landing-place cut him short.

About thirty or forty people had assembled from the surrounding districts, some of whom had come four or even six miles to attend church. They formed a quiet, grave, orderly company of men and women in homespun garments, with only a few children among them. The arrival of the laird's party made a very considerable addition to the congregation, and, as the hour for meeting had already passed by a few minutes, they made a general move towards the church.

The building was wonderfully small, and in the most severely simple style of architecture, being merely an oblong structure of grey stone, with small square windows, and a belfry at one end of the roof. It might have been mistaken for a cottage but for this, and the door being protected by a small porch, and placed at one end of the structure, instead of at the side.

A few of the younger men remained outside in conversation, awaiting the advent of the minister. After a time, however, these dropped in and took their seats, and people began to wonder why the minister was so late. Presently a boy with bare legs and a kilt entered the church and whispered to a very old man, who turned out to be an elder. Having heard the boy's message, the elder crossed over to the pew in which the laird was seated and whispered to him, not so low,

however, as to prevent Giles Jackman from hearing all that passed. The minister's horse had fallen, he said, and bruised the minister's legs so that he could not officiate.

"Very awkward," returned the laird, knitting his brows. "What's to be done? It seems absurd that so many of us should assemble here just to look solemn for a few minutes and then go home."

"Yes, sir, it iss akward," said the elder. "Could you not gif us a discoorse yoursel', sir, from the pre-zenter's dask?"

The latter part of the proposition was to guard himself from the imputation of having asked the laird to mount the *pulpit*!

"Me preach!" exclaimed the laird; "I never did such a thing in my life."

"Maype you'll read a chapter, what-ē-ver," persisted the elder.

"Impossible! I never read a chapter since I was born—in public, I mean, of course. But why not do it yourself, man?"

"So I would, sir, but my throat 'll not stand it."

"Is there no other elder who could do it?"

"Not wan, sir. I'm afraid we will hev to dismiss the congregation."

At this point, to the laird's relief and no little surprise, Jackman leaned forward, and said in a low voice, "If you have no objection, I will undertake to conduct the service."

The elder gave the laird a look which, if it had been translated into words, would probably have conveyed the idea—"Is he orthodox?"

"By all means, Mr. Jackman," said the laird; "you will be doing us a great favour."

Accordingly Jackman went quietly to the precentor's desk and mounted it, much to the surprise of its proper occupant, a man with a voice like a brass trumpet, who thereupon took his seat on a chair below the desk.

Profound was the interest of the congregation when they saw this bronzed, broad-shouldered, big-bearded young man pull a small Bible out of his pocket and begin to turn over the leaves. And it was noted with additional interest by several of the people that the Bible seemed to be a well-worn one. Looking up from it after a few minutes, during which it was observed that his eyes had been closed, Jackman said, in an easy, conversational tone, that quite took the people by surprise,—

"Friends, it has been my lot in life to wander for some years in wild and distant lands, where ministers of the Gospel were few and far between, and where Christians were obliged to conduct the worship of God as best they could. Your minister being unable to attend, owing to an accident, which I trust may not turn out to be serious, I shall attempt, with the permission of your elder, to lead your thoughts Godward, in dependence on the Holy Spirit. Let us pray."

The jealous ears of the rigorously orthodox heard him thus far without being able to detect absolute heresy, though they were sensitively alive to the unusual style and very unclerical tone of the speaker's voice. The same ears listened reverently to the prayer which followed, for it was, after the pattern of the Lord's Prayer, almost startlingly short; still it was very earnest, extremely simple, and, all things considered, undeniably orthodox.

Relieved in their minds, therefore, the people prepared themselves for more, and the precentor, with the brazen but tuneful voice, sang the first line of the psalm which the young preacher gave out—"I to the hills will lift mine eyes"—with rasping energy. At the second line the congregation joined in, and sang praise with reverent good-will, so that, when a chapter of the Word had been read and another psalm sung, they were brought to a state of hopeful expectancy. The text still further pleased them, when, in a quiet voice, while turning over the leaves of the well-used Bible, Jackman said, "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths."

Laying down his little Bible, and looking at the people earnestly and in silence for a few moments, the preacher said,—“I have travelled in Italy, France, Germany, Switzerland, and other places, and I never yet went in these countries without a guide-book. More than that, never in all my experience have I seen men or women travelling in these countries without a guide-book. The travellers always carried their guide-

books in their hands, or in their pockets, and consulted them as they went along. In the evenings, round the tables or on the sofas of the salons, they would sometimes sit poring over the pages of their guide-books, considering distances and the best routes, and the cost of travelling and board. Any man who would have travelled without a guide-book, or who, having one, neglected to use it, would have been considered weak-minded at the least. Still further, I have noted that such travellers *believed* in their guide-books, and usually acted on the advice and directions therein given.

“But one journey I can tell of in which all this seems to be reversed—the journey from earth towards heaven. And here is our guide-book for that journey,” said the preacher, holding up the little Bible. “How do we treat it? I do not ask scoffers, who profess not to believe in the Bible. I ask those who *call themselves* Christians, and who would be highly offended if we ventured to doubt their Christianity. Is it not true that many of us consult our Guide-book very much as a matter of form and habit, without much real belief that it will serve us in all the minute details of life? We all wish to get on in life. The most obstinate and contradictory man on earth admits that. Even if he denies it with his lips, all his actions prove that he admits it. Well, what says our Guide-book in regard to what is called ‘getting on’? ‘In *all* thy ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct thy paths.’ Now, what could be simpler—we might even

say, what could be easier—than this? Him whom we have to acknowledge is defined in the previous verse as ‘the Lord’—that is, Jesus, Immanuel, or God with us.”

From this point the sunburnt preacher diverged into illustration, leaning over the desk in a free-and-easy, confidential way, and thrilling his audience with incidents in his own adventurous career, which bore directly on the great truth that, as regards the Great End of life, success and blessedness result from acknowledging the Lord, and that failure and disaster inevitably await those who ignore Him.

While Jackman proceeded with his discourse, the sky had become overcast, dark thunderclouds had been gathering in the nor'-east, rain had also begun to descend; yet so intently were the people listening to this unusual style of preacher, that few of them observed the change until a distant thunderclap awoke them to it.

Quietly but promptly Jackman drew his discourse to a close, and stepped out of the desk, remarking, in the very same voice with which he had preached, that he feared he had kept them too long, and that he hoped none of the congregation had far to go.

“We hev that, sir,” said the old elder, shaking him warmly by the hand; “but we don’t heed that, an’ we are fery glad that we came, what-ē-ver.”

As the wind had also risen, and it seemed as if the weather was not likely to improve, the laird hurried his party down to the boat. Waterproofs were put on,

umbrellas were put up, the sails were hoisted, and the boat put off.

“I fear the sea is very rough,” remarked Milly Moss, drawing close to Aggy Anderson, so as to shelter her somewhat from the driving rain.

“Oo, ay; it iss a wee rough,” assented Ian, who now took the helm; “but we wull soon rin ower. Haud you the main sheet, Mr. Mabberly, an’ pe ready to let co when I tell ye. It iss a wee thing squally.”

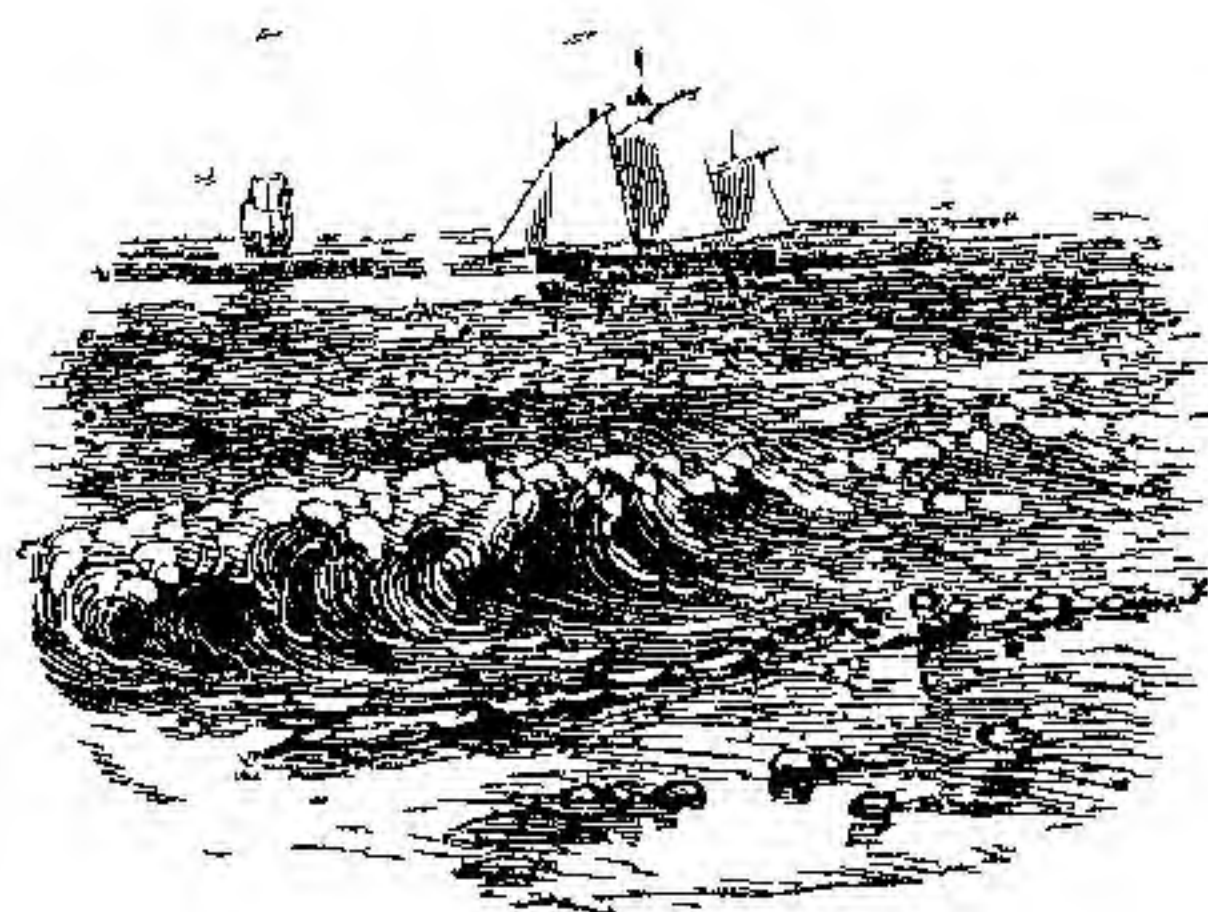
It was indeed a little more than a “wee thing squally,” for just then a vivid flash of lightning was seen to glitter among the distant crags of the Eagle Cliff. This was followed by a loud clap of thunder, which, leaping from cliff to crag, reverberated among the mountains with a succession of crashes that died away in ominous mutterings. At the same time a blue line towards the nor'-east indicated an approaching squall.

“Had we not better take in a reef, Ian?” asked the laird anxiously.

“We had petter weather the pint first,” said the boatman; “efter that the wund wul pe in oor favour, an’—but, ye’re richt. Tak in a reef, Roderick an’ Tonal’. Mind the sheet, Mr. Mabberly, an’ sit low in the poat, poys.”

These orders were promptly obeyed, for the squall was rushing down the loch very rapidly. When it burst on them the boat leaned over till her lee gunwale almost ran under water, but Ian was a skilful boatman, and managed to weather the point in safety.

After that, as he had said, the wind was more favourable, enabling them to run before it. Still, they were not out of danger, for a wide stretch of foaming sea lay between them and the shores of Kinlossie, while a gathering storm was darkening the sky behind them.





CHAPTER XII.

STIRRING EVENTS OF MORE KINDS THAN ONE.

THE squall which blew the Kinlossie boat round the Eagle Point was but the precursor of a succession of heavy squalls which quickly changed into a furious gale, compelling Ian Anderson to close reef his sails. Even when this was done, the boat rushed through the foaming water with tremendous velocity, and exhibited that tendency to drinking, to which reference has already been made ; for every time she plunged into the trough of the sea, a little water came over the bow.

Of course, going as they were at such a rate, the traversing of six or eight miles of water occupied but little time, and they were soon close to the bay, at the head of which Kinlossie House nestled among its trees.

“Come aft, poys,” shouted Ian, whose voice, strong though it was, could scarcely be heard in the bow

owing to the roaring of the gale; "she's trinkin' too much; come aft, an' look sherp!"

The three boys obeyed with alacrity, being well accustomed to boats, and aware of the necessity of prompt obedience in circumstances of danger.

Thus lightened, the boat ceased drinking at the bow, but, being rather overweighted at the stern, she now and then took in a little water there.

Unfortunately the point of rocks which formed the southern end of Kinlossie Bay obliged Ian to change his course a little in order to weather them. This was a critical operation. Even the girls had some sort of idea of that, as their looks bore witness. John Barret felt a strong inclination to slip his arm round Milly's waist and whisper, "Don't be afraid, beloved, *I'll take care of you!*" but want of courage—to say nothing of a sense of propriety—kept his lips silent and his arm still.

"Noo, keep stiddy, all of ye," said Ian, as he shifted the helm a little.

An irrepressible shriek burst from Aggy Anderson, for the boat lay over so much that the hissing water rippled almost into her, and seemed about to swallow them up.

"Tak anither haul o' the sheet, Maister Mabberly," cried Ian.

Assisted by Jackman, Mabberly obeyed, and the boat went, as Quin said, "snorin'" past the rocks, which were now close under her lee, with the waves bursting wildly over them. Another minute and the

outermost rock was under their port bow. To the eyes of the girls it seemed as if destruction were inevitable. To make matters worse, at that moment a vivid flash was succeeded by a loud thunder-clap, which, mingling with the gale, seemed to intensify its fury, while a deluge of rain came down. But Ian knew what he was about. With a firm hand on the tiller he steered past the point, yet so closely that it seemed as if an active man might have leaped upon the outermost rock, which rose, black and solid, amid the surging foam.

Another moment and the boat swept safely round into the bay, and was again put before the wind.

"We're a' richt noo, what-ē-ver," said Ian with a grunt of satisfaction.

Never before did a self-sufficient boatman have his words more effectually or promptly falsified than on that occasion. The distance between boat and shore at that moment was only a few hundred yards; but the water all the way was deep, and the waves, in consequence, were large and wild. There were great possibilities within the brief space of distance and time that lay before them!

"Tak an' oar, Maister Quin, an' help Rodereek to fend off," cried the boatman. "Hold ticht to the sheet, sir, an' pe ready to let co the moment I tell ye. Are ye ready wi' the halyards, Muster Airchie?"

"All right, Ian," replied the boy, who stood ready to lower the sail.

They could see that several men were standing on

the beach, ready to render assistance, among them Duncan, the butler, and Ivor, the gamekeeper. The latter, who had evidently recovered himself, was standing waist-deep in the foam, as if anxious to grasp the boat when it grounded.

“Ivor is unusually keen to help us to-day,” remarked the laird, with a peculiar look; but no one was sufficiently disengaged to listen to or answer him.

At that critical moment Junkie took it into his unaccountable head to scramble to the fore part of the boat, in order, as he said, to lend a hand with a rope. On reaching the bow he stumbled; the boat plunged heavily, as if to accommodate him, and he went overboard with a suddenly checked yell, that rose high and sharp above the roaring gale!

Of course every man near him sprang to the side and made a wild grasp at him. The gunwale went down, the sea rushed in, and, in a space of time brief as the lightning flash, all the occupants of the boat were struggling in the waves!

A great cry arose from the shore, and Ivor, plunging into the surf, was seen to breast the billows with the force of a Hercules. In the moment of upsetting, John Barret's cowardice and scruples vanished. He seized Milly by the arm, and held her up when they rose from the plunge.

And now, for the first time in his life, our hero found the advantage of having trained himself, not only in all manly exercises, but in the noble art of

rescuing life from the water. Instead of rising to the wild discovery of helpless ignorance as to what was the best way of using his great strength, he rose with the comfortable knowledge, first, that he was a powerful swimmer, and second, that he knew exactly what to do—at least to attempt. Instead, therefore, of allowing himself to be hugged, and probably drowned, by the girl he loved, he held her off at arm's length until he managed to grasp her by both arms close to the shoulders, and with her back towards him—treading water while doing so. Then, swimming on his own back, he gently drew her upon his breast, so that her head rested close to his chin. Thus the girl's face was turned upwards and held well out of the water, and the youth was able to say almost in her ear, "Trust in God, dearest, He will save us!" while he struck out vigorously with his legs. Thus, swimming on his back, he headed for the shore.

Lest the reader should fancy that we are here merely inventing a mode of action, it may be well to state that we have conversed with a man styled "the Rescue," whose duty it was to watch the boys of Aberdeen while bathing on the dangerous coast there, and who told us that he had saved some hundreds of lives—many of them in the manner above described.

Every one in the boat was fortunately able to swim, more or less, except Milly and Aggie Anderson. With the utmost anxiety to save the latter, her Uncle Ian made a desperate plunge when the boat upset at the

spot where, in the confusion, he thought he saw her go down. He grasped something under water, which clutched him violently in return. Rising to the surface he found that he had got hold of Giles Jackman, who, animated by the same desire to rescue the same girl, had also made a plunge at her. Flinging each other off almost angrily, they swam wildly about in search of her, for Giles had observed that Barret was sufficiently intent on Milly.

But poor Aggie was in even better hands. Ivor Donaldson had kept his eyes on her from the moment that he could distinguish faces in the approaching boat. He was a splendid swimmer. Even against wind and waves he made rapid headway, and in a few seconds caught the girl by the hair. In his case the absence of a plan of rescue was to some extent remedied by sheer strength of body, coupled with determination. The poor girl did her best to choke him, as drowning people will, but, happily, she was too weak for the purpose and he too strong! He suffered her to do her worst, and, with the arm which she left free, made his way gallantly to the beach, where Duncan and all the domestics were ready to receive them.

Barret and Milly had landed just before them. Immediately after Archie and Eddie were swept in amid the foam, and Junkie himself—who, like his brothers, could swim like a cork—came careering in on the top of a wave, like a very water-imp! With all the energy of his nature he turned, the moment his feet touched

ground, to lend a hand to his friend Tonal', who was not far behind him.

Thus, one by one, the whole party got safely to land, for the laird, although old, was still vigorous, and, like the others, able to swim. MacRummle came in last, and they had some difficulty in getting him out of the water, for he was rather sluggish, as well as heavy; but he was none the worse for his immersion, and to the anxieties afterwards expressed by his friends, he replied quietly that he had become pretty well used to the water by that time. It was a trying experience, however, for all of them, and, in the opinion of Ian Anderson, as he gave it to his wife when they met, "it was a queer way o' feenishin' off a fery extraor'nar Sawbath tay—what-ē-ver!"

One morning, not long after this incident, the gentlemen made up a shooting party to try the summit of the hill for mountain hares—their hostess having twitted them with their inability to keep the household supplied with hare soup.

"I will accompany you, gentlemen, to the shoulder of the first hill," observed their host, as he finished his breakfast, "but not farther, for I am not so young as I once was, and cannot be expected to keep pace with a 'Woods and Forester.'"

"That is not a good reason for your stopping short, laird," retorted Jackman, with a smile, "because it is quite possible for the 'Woods and Forester' to regulate his pace to that of the Western Isles."

"Well, we shall see," returned his host. "And

what does my reckless Milly intend to do with herself?"

"I mean to have a little picnic—all by myself," said Milly; "that is to say with nobody but me and Aggy Anderson."

"D'you think that quite safe, so soon after her ducking?" asked Mrs. Gordon.

"Quite safe, auntie, for she has not felt a bit the worse for that ducking; indeed, she seems much the better for it, and I am quite sure that hill air is good for her."

"Oh! then, you mean to have your very select picnic on the hills?" said the laird.

"Yes, but no one shall know to what part we are going, for, as I have said, we mean to have a day of it all to ourselves; only we will take Junkie to protect us, and carry our provisions."

There were two of the gentlemen who declined the shooting expedition. John Barret said he would start with them, but would at a certain point drop behind and botanise. MacRummle also preferred to make *one more* effort to catch that grilse which had risen so often to him of late, but was still at large in the big pool under the fall. The result of the morning's discussion was that only Mabberly and Jackman proceeded to assault the hares on the mountain-top, accompanied by Archie and Eddie, with Ivor Donaldson to guide them.

Up in the nursery—that devastated region which suggested the idea of an hospital for broken furniture

and toys—poor little neglected Flo sat down on the floor, and, propping her favourite doll up against the remnant of a drum, asked that sable friend what she would like to do. Receiving no answer, she said, in a cheery, confidential tone, which she had acquired from her mother, “I’ll tell you what, Miss Blackie, you an’ I will go for a picnic too. Zere’s plenty places for you an’ me, as well as for Kuzn Miwy to go to, an’ we will let muzzer go wid us—if she’s dood. So go, like a dood chile’, an’ get your things on.”

As the day was particularly bright and warm, this minor picnic was splendidly carried into effect, in a little coppice close to the house. There Mrs. Gordon knitted and sometimes read, and behaved altogether like a particularly “dood chile,” while Flo and Blackie carried on high jinks around her.

The Eagle Cliff was the spot which Milly Moss had fixed on for her select little picnic with the niece of the fisherman. Strange to say, and without the slightest knowledge or suspicion of this fact (so he said), John Barret had selected the very same spot for his botanical ramble. It must be remembered, however, that it was a wide spot.

Seated in a secluded nook, not long after noon, Milly and Aggy, with Junkie, enjoyed the good things which were spread on a mass of flat rock in front of them.

“Now I call this jolly!” said Junkie, as well as he could, with a mass of jam-tart stopping the way.

“It is indeed,” returned Milly; “but I don’t feel

quite sure whether you refer to the splendour of the scenery or the goodness of the tart."

"To both," returned the boy, inarticulately.

"Do you think you could eat any more?" asked Milly with a grave, earnest look that made Aggy giggle—for Aggy was a facile giggler!

"No, I don't," said Junkie, "I'm stuffed!"

"Well, then, you are at leisure to fill the cup again at the spring; so run, like a good boy, and do it."

"How hard you are on a fellow, Cousin Milly," grumbled the youngster, rising to do as he was bid; but the expression of his jammy face showed that he was no unwilling slave.

"How old are you, Aggy?" asked Milly when he was gone.

"Sixteen last birthday," returned the girl.

"Ah! how I wish I was sixteen again!" said Milly, with a profound sigh, as she gazed over the rim of a tartlet she happened to be eating, at the glittering sea and the far-off horizon. She was evidently recalling some very sad and ancient memories.

"Why?" asked her companion, who exhibited a very slight tendency to laugh.

"Because I was so light-hearted and happy at that age."

"How old are you now, Miss Milly?" asked Aggy, in a tone of increased respect.

"Nineteen," replied the other with a sigh.

Again Aggy's pretty round face was rippled by a

suppressed giggle, and it is highly probable that she would have given way altogether if Junkie had not returned at the moment and rescued her.

“Here’s the water, Milly. Now, Aggy, have you had enough?”

“Yes, quite enough,” laughed the highly convalescent invalid.

“Well, then, come along wi’ me and I’ll show you the place where Cousin Milly fell down. *You* needn’t come, Milly. I want to show it to Aggy all by herself, an’ we won’t be long away.”

“Very well, Junkie, as you please. I daresay I shall manage to pass the time pleasantly enough till you return.”

She leant back on a thick heather bush as she spoke, and indulged herself in that most enjoyable and restful of occupations, on a bright warm day, namely, looking straight up into the sunny sky and contemplating the soft fleecy clouds that float there, changing their forms slowly but continually.

Now it so happened that John Barret, in his botanical wanderings about the Eagle Cliff, in quest of the “rare specimens” that Milly loved, discovered Milly herself! This was not such a matter-of-course discovery as the reader may suppose, for the Eagle Cliff occupied a vast space of the mountain-side, among the rugged ramparts and knolls of which several persons might have wandered for hours without much chance of observing each other, unless they were to shout or discharge the echo-disturbing gun.

Whether it was the mysterious attraction or the occult discernment of love that drew him, we cannot tell, but certain it is that when Barret, standing on the upper edge of the cliff, glanced from the eagle—which was watching him suspiciously—downward to the base of the cliff, where the sheep appeared like little buff spots on the green grass, his startled eyes alighted on Milly, lying on her back, contemplating the heavens!

At that distance she might have been a mole or a rabbit, as far as regards Barret's power to discern her face or figure or occupation went; nevertheless, Barret knew at once that it was she, as his look and colour instantly indicated. There is something in such matters which we cannot understand, and, perhaps, had better not attempt to comprehend. It is sufficient to say that the young man instantly forgot his occupation, and began to descend the cliff by break-neck routes in a way that must have surprised—if not alarmed—the very eagle himself. He even trod some exceedingly rare "specimens" under foot in his haste. In a few minutes he drew near to the spot where Milly lay.

Then he suddenly stopped, for he remembered that she had that morning spoken of her picnic as a very private one; and was it not taking a base, unwarrantable advantage of her, thus to intrude on her privacy? But then—ah! how fatally, if not fortunately, that "but then" often comes in to seal our fate—"fix our flints," as backwoodsmen are fond of putting it!—but

then, was not the opportunity unsought—quite accidental? Would it not be utterly absurd, as well as disingenuous, to pass her and pretend not to see her, with his botanical box full of her own favourite plants and flowers?

Love is proverbially blind. The argument was more than sufficient. He shut his eyes, metaphorically, and rushed upon his fate.

Milly heard him rushing—in reality, walking—and knew his step! Another instance of the amazing—well—— She started up in some confusion, just in time to appear as if engaged in viewing with interest the majestic landscape spread out before her. Swooping downwards, and hovering overhead on grand expanded pinions, the eagle seemed to watch with keen interest the result of this meeting.

“Pardon this intrusion, Miss Moss. I really did not know you were in this neighbourhood till a few minutes ago,” said Barret, sitting down on the heather beside her. “I accidentally observed you, and I have been so very fortunate in finding rare plants this morning, that I thought I might venture, just for a few minutes, to interrupt the privacy of your picnic. See, here!” he added, taking off the botanical box and opening it; “just look at all this!”

“It is *very* kind of you to take so much trouble on my account, Mr. Barret,” said Milly, becoming deeply, almost too deeply—interested in the plants. “And, oh, *what* a splendid specimen of the heliographipod

My dear mother will be so glad to get this, for she is quite as fond of botany as I am."

"Indeed! Do you expect her soon?"

"Yes; her last letter leads me to expect her very soon now."

Milly looked up as she said this, but there was an expression on Barret's face which induced her instantly to recur to scientific research.

Now, good reader, if you think we are going further, and expect us rudely to draw aside the curtain here, and betray confidences, you are mistaken. But there is no reason against—indeed, the development of our story supplies every reason in favour of—our taking note of certain facts which bear indirectly on the subject before us.

Far away on a shoulder of the mountain, which rose on the other side of the valley, lying between it and the Eagle Cliff, a grey speck might have been seen perched on a rock. Even as the crow flies the distance was so great that the unassisted human eye could not have distinguished what it was. It might have been a grey cow, or a grey crow, or a grey rabbit, or a grey excrescence of the rock itself; but a telescope would have revealed the fact that it was Allen Gordon, the laird of Kinlossie!

Serenity was stamped on the old man's brow, for he was amiable by nature, and he had been rendered more amiable that morning by having had a pleasant chat, while ascending the mountain, with Mabberly and Jackman. The latter he had begun facetiously to

style the "Woods and Forester." The shooting party had left him there, according to previous arrangement, and the old gentleman had seated himself on the grey rock to rest and commune with nature for a short time, before beginning the descent of the steep mountain path, and wending his way homeward.

From his commanding point of observation the entire range of the Eagle Cliff lay spread out before him, with the sea visible on the extreme of either hand. The great valley lay between, with impassable gulfs and gorges caused by its wild torrents, and its level patches, strewn with the fallen *débris* of ages, out of which the larger masses of rock rose like islands in a grey ocean; but these huge masses became almost insignificant, owing to the over-powering impression of the cliff itself. For some time the laird gazed at it in silent admiration. Presently a smile beamed on his countenance.

"Ha! my puss, is that you?" he muttered, as he took a binocular telescope from his pocket and adjusted it. "I guessed as much. The Eagle Cliff has powerful attractions for you, what with its grandeur and the 'rare plants' you are so mad about. I *think* it is *you*, though at such a distance I might easily mistake a sheep or a deer for you—and, after all, that would be no mistake, for you *are* a dear!"

He did not condescend to smile at his own mild little joke, as he applied the telescope to his eyes.

"Yes, I'm right—and very comfortable you seem too, though I can't make out your party. Both Aggy

and Junkie seem to have left you. Perhaps the rocks may hide them. It's so far off that—hallo!”

A sudden frown clouded the laird's face as he gave vent to that hallo.

“The rascal!” he muttered between his compressed lips. “He heard at breakfast, as well as the rest of us, that Milly wanted no intruders. Humph! I had given him credit for better taste than this implies. Eh come, sir, this is quite inexcusable!”

The laird became excited as he continued to gaze, and his indignation deepened as he hastily wiped the glasses of the binocular. Applying them again to his eyes, his frown became still darker.

“For shame, you young scamp!” he continued to mutter, “taking advantage of your contemptible botany to bring your two heads together in a way that Milly would never have permitted *but* for that ridiculous science. Ha! they've let the whole concern fall—serves 'em right—and—no! dropped it on purpose! What! Do you *dare* to grip my niece's hand, and—and—she lets you! Eh! your arm round—— Stop!” shouted the wrathful man, springing up and almost hurling his binocular at the unconscious pair. But his shout, although fifty times louder, would have failed to cross the valley. Like his anger, it was unavailing. Thrusting the glass into its case with a bang, he strode down the mountain-side in rampant fury, leaving the solemn eagle to watch the lovers as they plighted their troth under the mighty cliff. Happily they brought the momentous transaction to a close just before Junkie

and the highly convalescent Aggy Anderson re-appeared upon the scene.

That afternoon, before dinner, John Barret asked Mr. Gordon to accord him the pleasure of a private interview in the library.

“Certainly, sir,” said the laird sternly; “and all the more that I had very much desired some private conversation with *you*.”

Barret was not a little surprised at the old man’s tone and manner, but took no notice of it, and went alone with him into the library, where he made a full and frank confession of his love for Milly, and of his having proposed to her and been accepted—on condition that her mother did not object.

“And now, Mr. Gordon,” added the youth, earnestly, “I have come to apologise to you, to ask your forgiveness, in fact, and to express my extreme regret at the precipitancy of my conduct. It had been my full intention, I do assure you, to wait until I had Mrs. Moss’ sanction to pay my addresses to her daughter, but a—a—sudden opportunity, which I had not sought for or expected—for, of course, I knew nothing of the place where the picnic was to be—this—this—opportunity, I say, took me by surprise, and threw me off my guard—and—and—in short, love—— Oh! *you* know well enough the power of love, Mr. Gordon, and can make allowance for my acting precipitately!”

The old gentleman was touched on a tenderer spot than the young man was aware of when he made this appeal to his own experience, for, in days gone by,

young Allen Gordon had himself acted precipitately.

But, although the appeal had touched him, he did not allow the fact to be seen, nor did he interrupt the youth's confession.

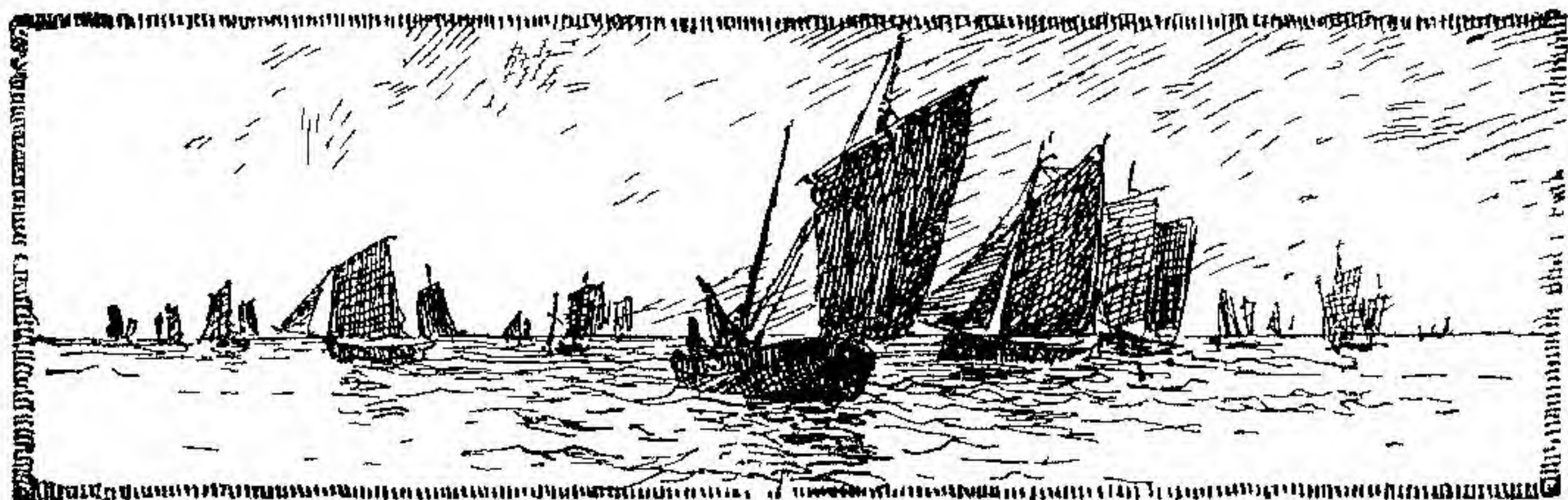
"Observe, Mr. Gordon," continued Barret, drawing himself up slightly, "the only wrong-doing for which I ask pardon is undue haste. My position, financially and otherwise, entitles me to marry, and darling Milly has a right to accept whom she will. If it be thought that she is too young and does not know her own mind, I am willing to wait. If she were to change her mind in the meantime, I would accept the inevitable—but I have no fear of *that*!"

The laird's features had been relaxing while the enthusiastic youth proceeded, but the last speech upset his gravity altogether.

"Well, well, Barret," he said, "since you have condemned yourself for acting hastily, it would ill become your host to overwhelm you with reproaches, and to say truth, after what you have said, I hope that the course of true love will in your case run smooth. But, my young friend," he added, in more serious tones, "I must strictly forbid any further reference to this with Milly till her mother comes. She is under my care and, being responsible for her, I must see that nothing further takes place till I am able to hand her, and all her affairs, over to her mother. I will explain this to Milly, and give her to understand that you will behave to her in all respects as you did before the

occurrence of this unfortunate picnic. Meanwhile it may comfort you to know that her mother is already predisposed in your favour—naturally too, for she would be ungrateful, as well as eccentric, if she had no regard for the man who has twice saved her child's life. Ah ! there goes the dinner-bell, and I'm glad of it, for prolonged speaking fatigues me. Come along ”





CHAPTER XIII.

A CHAPTER OF CATASTROPHES.

IT was the very next day after the conversation in the library that the waggonette was sent over to Cove to meet the steamer and fetch Mrs. Moss, who was expected to arrive. As Ian Anderson and Donald with the ragged head had to return home that day, they were offered a lift by their friend Roderick.

“I wad raither waalk, Rodereek,” said Ian; “but I dar’ say I may as weel tak a lift as far as the Cluff; chump up, Tonal’.”

Donald was not slow to obey. Although active and vigorous as a mountain goat, he had no objection to repose under agreeable conditions.

“What think ye o’ the keeper *this* time, Rodereek?” asked the boatman as they drove away.

“Oo, it wull be the same as last time,” answered the groom. “He’ll haud on for a while, an’ then he wull co pack like the soo to her wallowin’ i’ the mire.”

“I doubt ye’re richt,” returned Ian, with a solemn shake of the head. “He’s an unstiddy character, an’ he hes naither the fear o’ Cod nor man pefore his eyes. But he’s a plees’nt man when he likes.”

“Oo, ay, but there iss not in him the wull to give up the trink. He hes given it up more than wance before, an’ failed. He will co from pad to worse in my opinion. There iss no hope for him, I fear.”

“Fery likely,” and on the strength of that opinion Ian drew a flask from his pocket, and the two cronies had what the groom called a “tram” together.

Farther up the steep road they overtook John Barret and Giles Jackman, who saluted them with pleasant platitudes about the weather as they passed. Curiously enough, these two chanced to be conversing on the very subject that had engaged the thoughts of Ian and the groom.

“They say this is not the first time that poor Ivor has dashed his bottle to pieces,” said Barret. “I fear it has become a disease in this case, and that he has lost the power of self-control. From all I hear I have little hope of him. It is all the more sad that he seems to have gained the affections of that poor little girl, Aggy Anderson.”

“Indeed!” exclaimed Giles, laughing; “a fellow-feeling makes you wondrous sharp, I suppose, for I had not observed that interesting fact. But why do you speak in such pitiful tones of Aggy?”

“Because she is an invalid, and her lover is a drunkard. Sufficient reasons, I should think.”

“No, not quite, because she has almost recovered her usual health while here, and poor Ivor is, after all, only one of the sinners for whom Jesus Christ died. I have great hopes of him.”

“I’m glad to hear you say so, Jackman, though I don’t see that the fact of our Saviour’s dying for us all proves his case to be hopeful. Are there not hundreds of men of whom the same may be said, yet they are not delivered from drunkenness, and don’t seem likely to be?”

“That is unquestionably true,” rejoined his friend; “but such men as you refer to have not been brought to the condition of renouncing self, and trusting *only* in our Saviour. They want to have some credit in the matter of their own salvation—hence they fail. Ivor, I have good reason to believe, *has* been brought to that condition—a condition which insures success—hence my great hopes of him. I became aware of his state of mind partly from having had a long talk with him the other day, and partly from the report of his good old mother. She told me yesterday that Ivor had come to her, laid his hand on her shoulder, and said, ‘Mither, I’ve lost all hope o’ mysel’ noo;’ to which the old woman answered, ‘That’s the best news I’ve heard for mony a a day, my son, for noo the Lord wull let ye see what He can do for ye.’ Ivor’s reply to that was, ‘I believe ye’re richt, mither.’ Now I think that was a great deal to come from two such undemonstrative Celts.”

At this point in the conversation they reached a part of the road where a footpath diverged down to the

river, the road itself rising abruptly towards the Eagle Cliff.

“We separate here,” said Jackman. “I need scarcely ask where you are going, or what going to do! Botany, coupled with inaccessible cliffs, seems to be your mania just now. Oh! John Barret, my friend, may I not with truth, in your case, paraphrase a well-known couplet,—

“Milly in the heart breeds Milly in the brain,
And this reciprocally that again?”

“Your paraphrases are about equal to your compositions, Jackman, and in saying that I don’t compliment you. Pray, may I ask why you have forsaken your favourite weapon, the gun, and taken to the rod to-day?”

“Because of amiability—pure and simple. You know I don’t care a rush for fishing, but, to my surprise, this morning MacRummle expressed a wish to try my repeating rifle at the rabbits, and offered to let me try his rod, and—I might almost add—his river. Wasn’t it generous of him? So I’m off to have a try for ‘that salmon,’ and he is off, no one knows where, to send the terrified rabbits into their holes. Good-bye, old fellow—a pleasant day to you.”

Left alone, Barret began to devote himself to the cliffs. It was arduous work, for the said cliffs were almost perpendicular, and plants grew in such high-up crevices, and on such un-get-at-able places, that it seemed as if “rare specimens” knew their own value,

as well as the great demand for them, and selected their habitations accordingly.

It was pleasant work, and our hero revelled in it!



HE SAT DOWN TO CONSIDER WHAT WAS BEST TO BE DONE." [p. 250.

To be in such exceptional circumstances, with the grand cliffs above and below him, with no one near, save the lordly eagle himself, to watch his doings, with the wild sweeps of mountain-land everywhere, clothed with

bracken, heather, and birch, and backed by the island-studded sea; with the fresh air and the bright sun, and brawling burns, and bleating sheep, and the objects of his favourite science around him, and the strong muscular frame and buoyant spirits that God had given to enable him to enjoy it all, was indeed enough to arouse a feeling of gratitude and enthusiasm; but when, in addition to this, the young man knew that he was not merely botanising on his own account, but working at it for Milly, he felt as though he had all but attained to the topmost pinnacle of felicity!

It is sad to think that in human affairs this condition is not unfrequently the precursor of misfortune. It is not necessarily so. Happily, it is not always so. Indeed, we would fain hope that it is not often so, but it was so on this occasion.

Barret had about half filled his botanical box with what he believed to be an interesting collection of plants that would cause the eyes of Milly Moss to sparkle, when the position of the sun and internal sensations induced him to think of his midday meal. It was tied up in a little square paper package. There was a spring at the bottom of the cliffs. It was near the stone where he had met Milly, and had given way to precipitancy. Not far from the spot also where he had made Milly up into a bundle, with a plaid, and started with her towards Kinlossie. No place could be better than that for his solitary luncheon. He would go there.

Descending the cliffs, he gained the road, and was walking along towards the selected spot, when the sound

of wheels arrested him. Looking up, he saw the waggonette turn sharp round the projecting cliff, and approach him at a walk. He experienced a little depression of spirit, for there was no one in it, only the groom on the box. Milly would be sorely disappointed!

"Mrs. Moss has not come, I see," he said, as the groom reined up.

"Oo, ay, sir, she's come. But she iss a queer leddy. She's bean chumpin' in an' oot o' the waginette a' the way up, like a whutret, to admire the scenery, as she says. When we cam' to the heed o' the pass she chumped oot again, an' telt me to drive on slow, an' wait at the futt o' the first hull for her. She's no far ahint."

"I'll go and meet her. You can drive on, slowly."

Barret hurried forward with feelings of considerable uncertainty as to whether this chance of meeting his mother-in-law to be (he hoped!) alone, and in these peculiar circumstances, would be an advantage or otherwise. She might be annoyed by a sudden interruption in "admiring the scenery." There would be the awkwardness of having to introduce himself, and she might be fatigued after all her "chumpin'" in and out of the waggonette.

He was still pondering these points while he walked smartly forward, turned the projecting cliff above referred to, and all but overturned the identical little old lady whom he had run down on his bicycle, weeks before, in London!

To say that these two drew back and gazed at each

other intently—the lady quivering and pale, the youth aghast and red—is to give but a feeble account of the situation.

“Young man,” she said, indignantly, in a low, repressed voice, “you have a peculiar talent for assaulting ladies.”

“Madam,” explained the youth, growing desperate, “you are right. I certainly have a talent—at least a misfortune—of that sort——”

He stopped short, for, being quite overwhelmed, he knew not what to say.

“It is sad,” continued the little old lady in a tone of contempt, “that a youth like you should so much belie your looks. It was so mean of you to run away without a word of apology, just like a bad little boy, for fear of being scolded—not that I cared much for being run down with that horrid bicycle, for I was not hurt—though I *might* have been killed—but it was the cowardly way in which you left me lying helpless among bakers, and sweeps, and policemen, and dirty boys. Oh! it was disgraceful.”

Poor Barret became more and more overwhelmed as she went on.

“Spare me, madam,” he cried, in desperation. “Oh; if you only knew what I have suffered on your account since that unlucky day! Believe me, it was not cowardice—well, I cannot say that exactly—but it was not the fear of your just reproaches that made me fly. It was the approach of the police, and the fear of being taken up, and a public trial, and the disgrace of—of—

and—then I felt ashamed before I had fled more than a few hundred yards, and I returned to the spot, but you were gone, and I had no means of—of——”

“That will do, young man. There is no need to keep me standing in this wild place. You are living somewhere in this neighbourhood, I suppose?”

“Yes. I am living in the neighbourhood,” said Barret bitterly.

“Well, I am going to stay at Kinlossie House. You know Kinlossie House, I suppose?”

“Oh, yes, I know it.”

“There is no occasion to look so fierce or bitter, young sir. I am going to be at Kinlossie for some time. If you choose to call there, I shall be ready to listen to your explanations and apologies, for I have no desire to appear either harsh or unforgiving. Meanwhile, I wish you good morning.”

Saying which, and with a sweeping bow of a rather antiquated style, the offended lady passed on.

For a considerable time Barret stood motionless, with folded arms, “admiring the scenery” with a stony stare. A stone about the size of his fist lay at his foot. He suddenly kicked that violently into space. Had it been the size of his head, he would probably not have kicked it! Then he gave vent to a wild laugh, became suddenly grave, thrust his hands deep into his pockets, and walked up the road with clenched teeth and a deadly stride.

Mrs. Moss heard the laugh echoed among the great cliffs.

“What a dreadful young man!” she muttered, hurrying forward.

She thought of asking her driver who he was, but she had found Roderick to be a very taciturn Highlander. He had not shown much disposition to converse on the way up, and his speech had not been very intelligible to her English—or Anglicised—ears. She re-entered the waggonette, therefore, in silence. Roderick drove on also in silence, although much surprised that the “young shentleman” had not returned with the “leddy.” But that was none of his business “what-ē-ver.”

As the little old lady brooded over the matter, she resolved to say nothing of the meeting to Milly. She happened to possess a spice of humour, and thought it might be well to wait until the youth should call, and then, after forgiveness sought and obtained, introduce him at Kinlossie as the young man who ran her down in London !

Meanwhile Barret walked himself into a better state of mind, clambered to a nook on the face of one of the cliffs, and sat down to meditate and consider what was best to be done.

Although he had not gone out that day to shoot, but to botanise, he carried a light double-barrelled shot gun, in case he might get a chance at a hare, which was always acceptable to the lady of Kinlossie.

While the incidents just described were being enacted at the base of the Eagle Cliff, higher up, on a distant part of the same cliff, MacRummle might have been

seen prowling among the grey rocks, with the spirit of Nimrod, and the aspect of Bacchus.

It was the habit of MacRummle, being half blind, to supplement his vision with that peculiar kind of glasses which support—or refuse to support—themselves on the human countenance by means of the nose. These, although admirably adapted for reading, and even for quietly fishing by the river-side, he found to be miserably unsuited for sporting among the cliffs, for they were continually tumbling off as he stumbled along, or were twitched off by his rifle when he was in the act of making false points.

Perseverance was, however, the strong point in the old man's character—if it had a strong point at all. He replaced the glasses perpetually, and kept pointing persistently. He did little more than point, because the thing that he pointed at, whatever it was, usually got out of the way before MacRummle obtained a reliable aim. With a shot gun he might have done better, for that weapon admits of snap-shooting, with some chance of success, even in feeble hands. But the old man was ambitious. His object was to “pot” something, as he expressed it, with a single ball. Of course it was not all pointing. He did fire occasionally, with no other result than awaking the echoes and terrifying the rabbits. But the memory of his former success with the same weapon was strong upon him, and perseverance, as we have said, was rampant. On the whole, the fusillade that he kept up was considerable, much to the amusement of Barret (before meeting

Mrs. Moss !), who rightly guessed the cause of all the noise.

About midday, like Barret, he prepared to comfort himself with lunch, and, unlike our unfortunate hero, he enjoyed it in comfort, sitting on a green patch or terrace, high up near the summit of the cliffs, and a full mile distant from the spot where the peculiar meeting took place.

Like a giant refreshed MacRummle rose from lunch, a good deal more like Bacchus, and much less like Nimrod. A rabbit had been watching him from the cliff above nearly all the time he was eating. It moved quietly into its burrow when he rose, though there was no occasion to do so, because, although within easy rifle shot, MacRummle did not see it. When the sportsman was past, the rabbit came out and looked after him.

Fixing his glasses firmly he advanced in that stooping posture, with the rifle at the "ready," which is so characteristic of keen sportsmen! Next moment a rabbit stood before him—an easy shot. It sat up on its hind legs even, as if inviting its fate, and gazed as though uncertain whether the man was going to advance or not. He did not advance, but took a steady, deadly aim, and was on the point of pulling the trigger when the glasses dropped off.

MacRummle was wonderfully patient. He said nothing. He merely replaced his glasses and looked. The rabbit was gone. Several surrounding rabbits saw it go, but did not follow its example. They evidently felt themselves safe.

Proceeding cautiously onward, the sportsman again caught sight of one of the multitude that surrounded him. It was seated on the edge of its burrow, ready for retreat. Alas! for that rabbit if MacRummle had been an average shot, armed with a shot gun. But it was ignorant, and with the characteristic presumption of ignorance, it sat still. The sportsman took a careful and long—very long—aim, and fired! The rabbit's nose pointed to the world's centre, its tail to the sky, and when the smoke cleared away, it also was gone.

“Fallen into its hole! Dead, I suppose,” was the remark with which the sportsman sought to comfort himself. A bullet-mark on a rock, however, two feet to the left of the hole, and about a foot too high, shook his faith a little in this view.

It was impossible, however, that a man should expend so much ammunition in a region swarming with his particular prey without experiencing something in the shape of a fluke. He did, after a time, get one shot which was effectual. A young rabbit sat on the top of a mound looking at him with an air of impudence which is sometimes associated with extreme youth. A fat old kinsman—or woman—was seated in a hollow some distance farther on. MacRummle fired at the young one, missed it, and shot the kinsman through the heart. The disappointment of the old man when he failed to find the young one, and his joy on discovering the kinsman, we leave to the reader's imagination.

Thus he went on, occasionally securing something

for the pot, continually alarming the whole rabbit fraternity, and disgusting the eagle which watched him from a safe distance in the ambient atmosphere above.

By degrees he worked his way along till he came to the neighbourhood of the place where poor John Barret sat in meditative dejection. Although near, however, the two friends could neither see nor get at each other, being separated by an impassable gulf—the one being in a crevice, as we have said, not far from the foot of the cliff, the other hidden among the crags near the summit. Thus it came to pass that although Barret knew of MacRummle's position by his noise, the latter was quite ignorant of the presence of the former.

“This is horrible!” muttered the youth in his crevice below.

“Now I call this charming!” exclaimed the old man on his perch above.

Such is life—viewed from different standpoints! Ay, and correctly estimated, too, according to these different standpoints; for the old man saw only the sunny surrounding of the Present, while the young one gazed into the gloomy wreck of the Future.

Being somewhat fatigued, MacRummle betook himself to a sequestered ledge among the cliffs, and sat down under a shrub to rest. It chanced to be a well concealed spot. He remained quietly there for a considerable time, discussing with himself the relative advantages of fishing and shooting. It is probable

that his sudden disappearance and his prolonged absence induced the eagle to imagine that he had gone away, for that watchful bird, after several circlings on outstretched and apparently motionless wings, made a magnificent swoop downwards, and again resumed its floating action in the lower strata of its atmospheric world. There it devoted its exclusive attention to the young man, whose position was clearly exposed to its view.

As he sat there in gloomy thought, Barret chanced to raise his eyes, and observed the bird high above him—far out of gunshot.

“Fortunate creature!” he said aloud; “whatever may be the troubles of your lot, you are at least safe from exasperating *rencontres* with your future mother-in-law!”

We need not point out to the intelligent reader that Barret, being quite ignorant of the eagle’s domestic relations, indulged in mere assumptions in the bitterness of his soul.

He raised his fowling-piece as he spoke, and took a long, deliberate aim at the bird.

“Far beyond range,” he said, lowering the gun again; “but even if you were only four yards from the muzzle, I would not fire, poor bird! Did not Milly say you were noble, and that it would be worse than murder to kill you? No, you are safe from me, at all events, even if you were not so wary as to keep yourself safe from everybody. And yet, methinks, if Mac-Bumple were still up there, he would have the chance

of giving you a severe fright, though he has not the skill to bring you down."

Now it is well known to trappers and backwoodsmen generally that the most wary of foxes, which cannot by any means be caught by one trap, may sometimes be circumvented by two traps. It is the same with decoys, whether these be placed intentionally, or place themselves accidentally. On this occasion Barret acted the part of a decoy, all unwittingly to that eagle or to MacRummle.

In its extreme interest in the youth's proceedings the great bird soared straight over his head, and slowly approached the old man's position. MacRummle was not on the alert. He never was on the alert! but his eyes chanced to be gazing in the right direction, and his glasses happened to be on. He saw it coming—something big and black! He grasped his repeater and knocked his glasses off.

"A raven, I think! I'll try it. I should like it as a trophy—a sort of memorial of——"

Bang!

The man who was half blind, who had scarcely used gun or rifle all his life, achieved that which dead shots and ardent sportsmen had tried in vain for years—he shot the eagle right through the heart, and that, too, with a single bullet!

Straight down it fell with a tremendous flutter, and disappeared over the edge of its native cliff.

MacRummle went on his knees, and, craning his neck, replaced his glasses; but nothing whatever could



"MACRUMMLE SHOT THE EAGLE THROUGH THE HEART."

be seen, save the misty void below. Shrinking back from the giddy position, he rose and pulled out his watch.

“Let me see,” he muttered, “it will take me a full hour to go round so as to reach the bottom. No; too late. I’ll go home, and send the keeper for it in the morning. The eagle may have picked its bones by that time, to be sure; but after all, a raven is not much of a trophy.”

While he was thus debating, a very different scene was taking place below.

Barret had been gazing up at the eagle when the shot was fired. He saw the spout of smoke. He heard the crashing shot and echoes, and beheld the eagle descending like a thunderbolt. After that he saw and heard no more, for, in reaching forward to see round a projecting rock that interfered with his vision, his foot slipped, and he fell headlong from the cliff. He had not far to fall, indeed, and a whin bush broke the force of the shock when he did strike; but he was rendered insensible, and rolled down the remainder of the slope to the bottom. There he lay bruised, bleeding, and motionless on the grass, close to the road, with his bent and broken gun beneath him, and the dead eagle not more than a dozen yards from his side!

“It is not like Barret to be late,” observed the laird that evening, as he consulted his watch. “He is punctuality itself, as a rule. He must have fallen in with some unusually interesting plants. But we can’t wait. Order dinner, my dear, for I’m sure that my sister must be very hungry after her voyage.”

“Indeed I am,” returned the little old lady, with a peculiar smile. “Sea-sickness is the best tonic I know of, but it is an awful medicine to take.”

“Almost as good as mountain air,” remarked MacRummle, as they filed out of the drawing-room. “I do wish I had managed to bring that raven home.”

At first the party at dinner was as merry as usual. The sportsmen were graphic in recounting the various incidents of the day; Mrs. Moss was equally graphic on the horrors of the sea; MacRummle was eulogistic of repeating rifles, and inclined to be boastful about the raven, which he hoped to show them on the morrow, while Milly proved herself, as usual, a beautiful and interested listener, as well as a most hearty laughers.

But as the feast went on they became less noisy. Then a feeling of uneasiness manifested itself, but no one ventured to suggest that anything might have occurred to the absentee until the evening had deepened into night. Then the laird started up suddenly. “Something *must* have happened to our friend,” he exclaimed, at the same time ringing the bell violently. “He has never been late before, and however far he may have gone a-field, there has been more than time for him to return at his slowest pace. Duncan (as the butler entered), turn out all the men and boys as fast as you can. Tell Roderick to get lanterns ready—as many as you have. Gentlemen, we must all go on this search without another moment’s delay!”

There is little need to say that Barret’s friends and comrades were not slow to respond to the call. In less

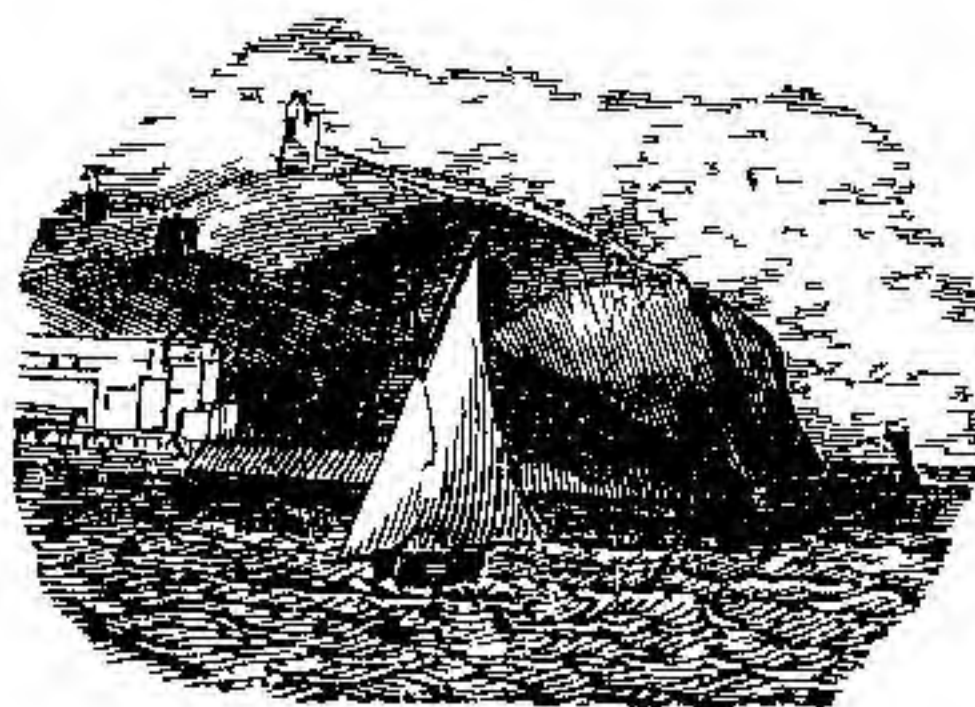
than a quarter of an hour they were dispersed, searching every part of the Eagle Cliff, where he had been last seen by Giles Jackman.

They found him at last, pale and blood-stained, making ineffectual efforts to crawl from the spot where he had fallen, both the eagle and the broken gun being found beside him.

“No bones broken, thank God!” said Giles, after having examined him and bound up his wounds. “But he is too weak to be questioned. Now, lads, fetch the two poles and the plaid. I’ll soon contrive a litter.”

“All right, old fellow! God bless you!” said Barret, faintly, as his friend bent over him.

Roderick and Ivor raised him softly, and, with the eagle at his side, bore him towards Kinlossie House. Soon after, their heavy tramp was heard in the hall as they carried him to his room, and laid him gently in bed.





CHAPTER XIV.

SUSPICIONS, REVELATIONS, AND OTHER MATTERS.

WITH a swelled and scratched face, a discoloured eye, a damaged nose, and a head swathed in bandages—it is no wonder that Mrs. Moss failed to recognise in John Barret the violent young man with the talent for assaulting ladies!

She was not admitted to his room until nearly a week after the accident, for, although he had not been seriously injured, he had received a rather severe shock, and it was thought advisable to keep him quiet as a matter of precaution. When she did see him at last, lying on a sofa in a dressing-gown, and with his head and face as we have described, his appearance did not call to her remembrance the faintest resemblance to the confused, wild, and altogether incomprehensible youth, who had tumbled her over in the streets of London and almost run her down in the Eagle Pass.

Of course Barret feared that she would recognise him, and had been greatly exercised as to his precise

duty in the circumstances; but when he found that she did not recognise either his face or his voice, he felt uncertain whether it would not be, perhaps, better to say nothing at all about the matter in the meantime. Indeed, the grateful old lady gave him no time to make a "clean breast of it," as he had at first intended to do.

"Oh! Mr. Barret," she exclaimed, sitting down beside him, and laying her hand lightly on his arm, while the laird sat down on another chair and looked on benignly, "I cannot tell you how thankful I am that you have not been killed, and how very grateful I am to you for all your bravery in saving my darling Milly's life. Now, don't say a word about disclaiming credit, as I know you are going to do——"

"But, dear madam," interrupted the invalid, "allow me to explain. I cannot bear to deceive you, or to sail under false colours——"

"Sail under false colours! Explain!" repeated Mrs. Moss, quickly. "What nonsense do you talk? Has not my daughter explained, and *she* is not given to colouring things falsely."

"Excuse me, Mrs. Moss," said Barret; "I did not mean that. I only——"

"I don't care what you mean, Mr. Barret," said the positive little woman; "it's of no use your denying that you have behaved in a noble, courageous manner, and I won't listen to anything to the contrary; so you need not interrupt me. Besides, I have been told not to allow you to speak much; so, sir, if I am to remain beside you at all, I must impose silence."

Barret sank back on his couch with a sigh, and resigned himself to his fate.

So much for the mother. Later in the same day the daughter sat beside his couch. The laird was not present on that occasion. They were alone.

“Milly,” said the invalid, taking her small hand in his, “have you mentioned it yet to your mother?”

“Yes, John,” replied Milly, blushing in spite of—nay, rather more in consequence of—her efforts not to do so. “I spoke to her some days ago. Indeed, soon after the accident, when we were sure you were going to get well. And she did not disapprove.”

“Ay, but have you spoken since she has seen me—since this morning?”

“Yes, John.”

“And she is still of the same mind—not shocked or shaken by my appearance?”

“She is still of the same mind, returned Milly; “and not shocked in the least. My darling mother is far too wise to be shocked by trifles—I—I mean by scratches and bruises. She judges of people by their hearts.”

“I’m glad to hear that, Milly, for I have something shocking to tell her about myself, that will surprise her, if it does nothing else.”

“Indeed!” said Milly, with the slightest possible rise of her pretty eyebrows.

“Yes. You have heard from your mother about that young rascal who ran into her with his bicycle in London some time ago?”

“Yes; she wrote to me about it,” replied Milly, with an amused smile. “You mean, I suppose, the reckless youth who, after running her down, had the cowardice to run away and leave her lying flat on the pavement? Mother has more than once written about that event with indignation, and rightly, I think. But how came you to know about it, John?”

“Milly,” said Barret, holding her hand very tight, and speaking solemnly, “*I am that cowardly man!*”

“Now, John, you are jesting.”

“Indeed—indeed I am not.”

“Do you really mean to say that it was *you* who ran against my—— Oh! you *must* be jesting!”

“Again I say I am *not*. I am the man—the coward.”

“Well, dear John,” said Milly, flushing considerably, “I must believe you; but the fact does not in the least reduce my affection for you, though it will lower my belief in your prudence, unless you can explain.”

“I will explain,” said Barret; and we need scarcely add that the explanation tended rather to increase than diminish Milly’s affection for, as well as her belief in, her lover! But when Barret went on further to describe the meeting in the Eagle Pass, she went off into uncontrollable laughter.

“And you are sure that mother has no idea that you are the man?” she asked

“Not the remotest.”

“Well, now, John, you must not let her know for

some time yet. You must gain her affections, sir, before you venture to reveal your true character."

Of course Barret agreed to this. He would have agreed to anything that Milly proposed, except, perhaps, the giving up of his claim to her own hand. Deception, however, is variably surrounds the deceiver with more or less of difficulty. That same evening, while Milly was sitting alone with her mother, the conversation took a perplexing turn.

There had been a pretty long pause, after a rather favourable commentary on the character of Barret, when the thin little old lady had wound up with the observation that the subject of their criticism was a remarkably agreeable man, with a playfully humorous and a delightfully serious turn of mind—"and so modest" withal!

Apparently the last words had turned her mind into the new channel, for she resumed,—

"Talking of insolence, my dear——"

"*Were* we talking of insolence, mother?" said Milly, with a surprised smile.

"Well, my love, I was thinking of the opposite of modesty, which is the same thing. Do you know, I had a meeting on the day of my arrival here which surprised me very much? To say truth, I did not mention it sooner, because I wished to give you a little surprise. Why do you change your seat, my love? Did you feel a draught where you were?"

"No—no. I—I only want to get the light a little more at my back—to keep it off my face. But go on,

mother. What was the surprise about? I'm anxious to know."

If Milly did not absolutely know, she had at least a pretty good idea of what was coming!

"Well, of course you remember about that young man—that—that *cowardly* young man who——"

"Who ran you down in London? Yes, yes, *I* know," interrupted the daughter, endeavouring to suppress a laugh, and putting her handkerchief suddenly to her face. "I remember well. The monster! What about him?"

"You may well call him a monster! Can you believe it? I have met him here—in this very island, where he must be living somewhere, of course; and he actually ran me down again—*all but*." She added the last two words in order to save her veracity.

"You don't really mean it?" exclaimed Milly, giving way a little in spite of herself. "With a bicycle?"

It was the mother's turn to laugh now.

"No, you foolish thing; even *I* have capacity to understand that it would be impossible to use those hideous—frightful instruments, on the bad hill-roads of this island. No; but it seems to be the nature of this dis—disagreeable—I had almost said detestable—youth, to move only under violent impulse, for he came round a corner of the Eagle Cliff at such a pace that, as I have said, he *all but* ran into my arms and knocked me down."

"Dreadful!" exclaimed Milly, turning her back still

more to the light and working mysteriously with her kerchief.

“Yes, dreadful indeed! And when I naturally taxed him with his cowardice and meanness, he did not seem at all penitent, but went on like a lunatic; and although what he said was civil enough, his way of saying it was very impolite and strange; and after we had parted, I heard him give way to fiendish laughter. I could not be mistaken, for the cliffs echoed it in all directions like a hundred hyenas!”

As this savoured somewhat of a joke, Milly availed herself of it, set free the safety-valve, and, so to speak, saved the boiler!

“Why do you laugh so much, child?” asked the old lady, when her daughter had transgressed reasonable limits.

“Well, you know, mother, if you *will* compare a man’s laugh to a hundred hyenas——”

“I didn’t compare the man’s voice,” interrupted Mrs. Moss; “I said that the cliffs——”

“That’s worse and worse! Now, mother, don’t get into one of your hypercritical moods, and insist on reasons for everything; but tell me about this wicked——this dreadful young man. What was he like?”

“Like an ordinary sportsman, dear, with one of those hateful guns in his hand, and a botanical box on his back. I could not see his face very well, for he wore one of those ugly pot-caps, with a peak before and behind; though what the behind one is for I cannot imagine, as men have no eyes in the back of their

heads to keep the sun out of. No doubt some men would make us believe they have! but it was pulled down on the bridge of his nose. What I did see of his face seemed to be handsome enough, and his figure was tall and well made, unquestionably; but his behaviour—nothing can excuse that! If he had only said he was sorry, one might have forgiven him.”

“Did he *not* say he was sorry?” asked Milly, in some surprise.

“Oh, well, I suppose he did; and begged pardon after a fashion. But what truth could there be in his protestations when he went away and laughed like a hyena.”

“You said a hundred hyenas, mother.”

“No, Milly, I said the cliffs laughed; but don’t interrupt me, you naughty child! Well, I was going to tell you that my heart softened a little towards the young man, for, as you know, I am not naturally unforgiving.”

“I know it well, dear mother!”

“So, before we parted, I told him that if he had any explanations or apologies to make, I should be glad to see him at Kinlossie House. Then I made up my mind to forgive him, and introduce him to you as the man that ran me down in London! This was the little surprise I had in store for you, but the ungrateful creature has never come.”

“No, and he never will come!” said Milly, with a hearty laugh.

“How do you know that, puss?” asked Mrs. Moss, in surprise.

Fortunately the dinner-bell rang at that moment, justifying Milly in jumping up. Giving her mother a rather violent hug, she rushed from the room.

“Strange girl!” muttered Mrs. Moss, as she turned and occupied herself with some mysterious—we might almost say captious—operations before the looking-glass. “The mountain air seems to have increased her spirits wonderfully. Perhaps love has something to do with it! It may be both!”

She was still engaged with a subtle analysis of this question—in front of the glass, which gave her the advantage of supposing that she talked with an opponent—when sudden and uproarious laughter was heard in the adjoining room. It was Barret’s sitting-room, in which his friends were wont to visit him. She could distinguish that the laughter proceeded from himself, Milly, and Giles Jackman, though the walls were too thick to permit of either words or ordinary tones being heard.

“Milly,” said Mrs. Moss, severely, when they met a few minutes later in the drawing-room, “what were you two and Mr. Jackman laughing at so loudly? Surely you did not tell them what we had been speaking about?”

“Of course I did, mother. I did not know you intended to keep the matter secret. And it did so tickle them! But no one else knows it, so I will run back to John and pledge him to secrecy. You can

caution Mr. Jackman, who will be down directly, no doubt."

As Barret had not at that time recovered sufficiently to admit of his going downstairs, his friends were wont to spend much of their time in the snug sitting-room which had been apportioned to him. He usually held his levées costumed in a huge flowered dressing-gown, belonging to the laird, so that, although he began to look more like his former self, as he recovered from his injuries, he was still sufficiently disguised to prevent recognition on the part of Mrs. Moss.

Nevertheless, the old lady felt strangely perplexed about him.

One day the greater part of the household was assembled in his room when Mrs. Moss remarked on this curious feeling.

"I cannot tell what it is, Mr. Barret, that makes the sound of your voice seem familiar to me," she said; "yet not exactly familiar, but a sort of far-away echo, you know, such as one might have heard in a dream; though, after all, I don't think I ever did hear a voice in a dream."

Jackman and Milly glanced at each other, and the latter put the safety-valve to her mouth while Barret replied,—

"I don't know," he said, with a very grave appearance of profound thought, "that I ever myself dreamt a voice, or, indeed, a sound of any kind. As to what you say about some voices appearing to be familiar, don't you think that has something to do with classes

of men? No man, I think, is a solitary unit in creation. Every man is, as it were, the type of a class to which he belongs—each member possessing more or less the complexion, tendencies, characteristics, tones, etc., of his particular class. You are familiar, it may be, with the tones of the class to which I belong, and hence the idea that you have heard my voice before.”

“Philosophically put, Barret,” said Mabberly; “I had no idea you thought so profoundly.”

“H’m! I’m not so sure of the profundity,” said the little old lady, pursing her lips; “no doubt you may be right as regards class; but then, young man, I have been familiar with all classes of men, and therefore, according to your principle, I should have some strange memories connected with Mr. Jackman’s voice, and Mr. Mabberly’s, and the laird’s, and everybody’s.”

“Well said, sister; you have him there!” cried the laird with a guffaw; “but don’t lug me into your classes, for I claim to be an exception to all mankind, inasmuch as I have a sister who belongs to no class, and is ready to tackle any man on any subject whatever, between metaphysics and baby linen. Come now, Barret, do you think yourself strong enough to go out with us in the boat to-morrow?”

“Quite. Indeed, I would have begged leave to go out some days ago, but Doctor Jackman there, who is a very stern practitioner, forbids me. However, I have my revenge, for I compel him to sit with me a great deal, and entertain me with Indian stories.”

“Oh!” exclaimed Junkie, who happened to be in the room, “he hasn’t told you yet about the elephant hunt, has he?”

“No, not yet, Junkie,” returned Barret; “he has been faithful to his promise not to go on with that story till you and your brothers are present.”

“Well, but tell it now, Mr. Jackman, and I’ll go an’ call Eddy and Archie,” pleaded the boy.

“You will call in vain, then,” said his father, “for they have both gone up the burn, one to photograph and the other to paint. I never saw such a boy as Archie is to photograph. I believe he has got every scene in the island worth having on his plates now, and he has taken to the cattle of late. What think ye was the last thing he tried? I found him in the yard yesterday trying to photograph himself!”

“That must indeed have puzzled him; how did he manage?” asked MacRummle.

“Well, it was ingenious. He tried to get Pat Quin to manipulate the instrument while he sat; but Quin is clumsy with his fingers, at least for such delicate work, and, the last time, he became nervous in his anxiety to do the thing rightly; so, when Archie cried ‘Now,’ for him to cover the glass with its little cap, he put it on with a bang that knocked over and nearly smashed the whole concern. So what does the boy do but sets up a chair in the right focus and arranges the instrument with a string tied to the little cap. Then he sits down on the chair, puts on a heavenly smile, and pulls the string. Off comes the cap! He

counts one, two—I don't know how many—and then makes a sudden dash at the camera an' shuts it up! What the result may be remains to be seen."

"Oh, it'll be the same as usual," remarked Junkie in a tone of contempt. "There's always something goes wrong in the middle of it. He tried to take Boxer the other day, and *he* wagged his tail in the middle of it. Then he tried the cat, and she yawned in the middle. Then Flo, and she laughed in the middle. Then me, an' I forgot and made a face at Flo in the middle. It's a pity it has got a middle at all; two ends would be better, I think. But won't you tell about the elephants to *us*, Mr. Jackman? There's plenty of us here—please!"

"Nay, Junkie; you would not have me break my word, surely. When we are all assembled together you shall have it—some wet day, perhaps."

"Then there'll be no more wet days *this* year, if I've to wait for that," returned the urchin half sulkily.

That same day, Milly, Barret, and Jackman arranged that the mystery of the cowardly young man must be cleared up.

"Perhaps it would be best for Miss Moss to explain to her mother," said Giles.

"That will not I," said Milly with a laugh.

"I have decided what to do," said Barret. "I was invited by her to call and explain anything I had to say, and apologise. By looks, if not by words, I accepted that invitation, and I shall keep it. If you could only manage somehow, Milly, to get everybody

out of the way, so that I might find your mother alone in——”

“She’s alone *now*,” said Milly. “I left her just a minute ago, and she is not likely to be interrupted, I know.”

“Stay, then ; I will return in a few minutes.”

Barret retired to his room, whence he quickly returned with shooting coat, knickerbockers, pot-cap and boots, all complete.

“‘Richard’s himself again!’ Allow me to congratulate you,” cried Jackman, shaking his friend by the hand. “But, I say, don’t you think it may give the old lady rather a shock as well as a surprise?”

Barret looked at Milly.

“I think not,” said Milly. “As uncle often says of dear mother, ‘she is tough.’”

“Well, I’ll go,” said Barret.

In a few minutes he walked into the middle of the drawing-room and stood before Mrs. Moss, who was reading a book at the time. She laid down the book, removed her glasses, and looked up.

“Well, I declare!” she exclaimed, with the utmost elevation of her eyebrows and distension of her eyes; “there you are at last! And you have not even the politeness to take your hat off, or have yourself announced. You are the most singularly ill-bred young man, for your looks, that I ever met with.”

“I thought, madam,” said Barret in a low voice, “that you would know me better with my cap on——”

He stopped, for the old lady had risen at the first

sound of his voice, and gazed at him in a species of incredulous alarm.

“Forgive me,” cried Barret, pulling off his cap; but again he stopped abruptly, and, before he could spring forward to prevent it, the little old lady had fallen flat upon the hearth-rug.

“Quick! hallo! Milly—Giles! Ass that I am! I’ve knocked her down *again*!” he shouted, as those whom he summoned burst into the room.

They had not been far off. In a few more minutes Mrs. Moss was reviving on the sofa, and alone with her daughter.

“Milly, dear, this has been a great surprise; indeed, I might almost call it a shock,” she said, in a faint voice.

“Indeed it has been, darling mother,” returned Milly in sympathetic tones, as she smoothed her mother’s hair; “and it was all my fault. But are you quite sure you are not hurt?”

“I don’t *feel* hurt, dear,” returned the old lady, with a slight dash of her argumentative tone; “and don’t you think that if I *were* hurt I should *feel* it?”

“Perhaps, mother; but sometimes, you know, people are so *much* hurt that they *can’t* feel it.”

“True, child, but in these circumstances they are usually unable to express their views about feeling altogether, which I am not, you see—no thanks to that—th—to John Barret.”

“Oh! mother, I cannot bear to think of it——”

“No wonder,” interrupted the old lady. “To think

of my being violently knocked down twice—*almost* three times—by a big young man like that, and the first time with a horrid bicycle on the top of us—I might almost say mixed up with us.”

“But, mother, he *never* meant it, you know——”

“I should *think* not!” interjected Mrs. Moss with a short sarcastic laugh.

“No, indeed,” continued Milly, with some warmth; “and if you only knew what he has suffered on your account——”

“Milly,” cried Mrs. Moss quickly, “is all that *I* have suffered on *his* account to count for nothing?”

“Of course not, *dear* mother. I don’t mean that; you don’t understand me. I mean the reproaches that his own conscience has heaped upon his head for what he has inadvertently done.”

“Recklessly, child, not inadvertently. Besides, you know, his conscience is not *himself*. People cannot avoid what conscience says to them. Its remarks are no sign of humility or self-condemnation, one proof of which is that wicked people would gladly get away from conscience if they could, instead of agreeing with it, as they should, and shaking hands with it, and saying, ‘we are all that you call us, and more.’”

“Well, that is exactly what John has done,” said Milly, with increasing warmth. “He has said all that, and more to me——”

“To *you*?” interrupted Mrs. Moss; “yes, but you are not his conscience, child!”

“Yes, I am, mother; at least, if I’m not, I am next

thing to it, for he says *everything* to me!" returned Milly, with a laugh and a blush. "And you have no idea how sorry, how ashamed, how self-condemned, how overwhelmed he has been by all that has happened."

"Humph! I have been a good deal more overwhelmed than he has been," returned Mrs. Moss. "However, make your mind easy, child, for during the last week or two, in learning to love and esteem John Barret, I have unwittingly been preparing the way to forgive and forget the cowardly youth who ran me down in London. Now go and send Mr. Jackman to me; I have a great opinion of that young man's knowledge of medicine and surgery, though he *is* only an amateur. He will soon tell me whether I have received any hurt that has rendered me incapable of feeling. And at the same time you may convey to that coward, John, my entire forgiveness."

Milly kissed her mother, of course, and hastened away to deliver her double message.

After careful examination and much questioning, "Dr." Jackman pronounced the little old lady to be entirely free from injury of any kind, save the smashing of a comb in her back hair, and gave it as his opinion that she was as sound in wind and limb as before the accident, though there had unquestionably been a considerable shock to the feelings, which, however, seemed to have had the effect of improving rather than deranging her intellectual powers. The jury which afterwards sat upon her returned their verdict in accordance with that opinion.

It was impossible, of course, to prevent some of all this leaking into the kitchen, the nursery, and the stable. In the first-mentioned spot, Quin remarked to the housemaid,—

“Sure, it’s a quare evint entirely,” with which sentiment the housemaid agreed.

“Aunt Moss is a buster,” was Junkie’s ambiguous opinion, in which Flo and the black doll coincided.

“Tonal’,” said Roderick, as he groomed the bay horse, “the old wuman iss a fery tough person.”

To which “Tonal’ ” assented, “She iss, what-ē-ver.”





CHAPTER XV.

ELEPHANTS AGAIN—FOLLOWED BY SOMETHING MORE
AWFUL.

THERE came a rainy day at last at Kinlossie House. Such days will come at times in human experience, both in metaphor and fact. At present we state a fact.

“It will bring up the fush,” was Roderick’s remark, as he paused in the operation of cleaning harness to look through the stable door on the landscape; “an’ that wull please Maister MacRummle.”

“It will pe good for the gress too, an’ that will please Muss Mully,” said Donald, now permanently appointed to the stables.

“H’m! she wull pe carin’ less for the gress, poy, than she wass used to do,” returned the groom. “It iss my opeenion that they wull pe all wantin’ to co away sooth pefore long.”

We refer to the above opinions because they were shared by the party assembled in Barret’s room, which

was still retained as a snugger, although its occupant was fully restored to normal health and vigour.

“You’ll be sure to get ‘that salmon’ next time you try, after all this rain, MacRummle,” said Mabberly. “At least, I hope you will before we leave.”

“Ay, and you must have another try with the repeater on the Eagle Cliff, Mac. It would never do to leave a lone widdy, as Quin calls it, after murdering the husband.”

“Perhaps I *may* have another day there,” answered the old gentleman, with a pleased smile; for although they roasted him a good deal for mistaking an eagle for a raven, and only gave him credit for a “fluke,” it was evident that he congratulated himself not a little on his achievement.

“Archie is having an awful time skinning and stuffing it,” said Eddie, who sat by the window dressing trout flies.

Junkie, who was occupied at another window, mending the top of his rod, remarked that nothing seemed to give Archie so much pleasure as skinning and stuffing something. “He’s always doing it,” said the youngster. “Whatever happens to die, from a tom-cat to a tom-tit, he gets hold of. I do believe if he was to die, he would try to skin and stuff himself!”

At that moment Archie entered the room.

“I’ve got it nearly done now,” he said, with a pleased expression, while he rubbed his not-over-clean hands. “I’ll set him up to-night and photograph him to-morrow, with Flo under his wings to show his *enormous* size.”

“Oh ! that minds me o’ the elephants,” cried Junkie, jumping up and running to Jackman, who was assisting Barret to arrange plants for Milly. “We are *all* here now—an’ you *promised*, you know.”

A heavy patter of rain on the window seemed to emphasise Junkie’s request by suggesting that nothing better could be done.

“Well, Junkie, I have no objection,” said the Woods-and-Forester, “if the rest of the company do not object.”

As the rest of the company did not object, but rather expressed anxiety to hear about the hunt, Jackman drew his chair near to the fire, the boys crowded round him, and he began with,—

“Let me see. Where was I?”

“In India, of course,” said Junkie.

“Yes ; but at what part of the hunt?”

“Oh ! you hadn’t begun the hunt at all. You had only made Chand something or other, Isri Per—what-dee-call-it, an’ Raj Mung-thingumy give poor Mowla Buksh such an awful mauling.”

“Just so. Well, you must know that next day we received news of large herds of elephants away to the eastward of the Ganges, so we started off with all our forces—hunters, matchlock-men, on-lookers, etc., and about eighty tame elephants. Chief among these last were the fighting elephants, to which Junkie gave such appropriate names just now, and king of them all was the mighty Chand Moorut, who had never been known to refuse a fight or lose a victory since he was grown up.

“It was really grand to see this renowned mountain of living flesh towering high above his fellows. Like all heroes, he was calm and dignified when not in action—a lamb in the drawing-room, a lion in the field. Even the natives, accustomed as they were to these giants, came to look at him admiringly that morning as he walked sedately out of camp. He was so big that he seemed to grow bigger while you looked at him, and he was absolutely perfect in form and strength—the very Hercules of brutes.

“The trackers had marked down a herd of wild elephants, not three miles distant, in a narrow valley, just suited to our purpose. On reaching the ground we learned that there was, in the jungle, a ‘rogue’ elephant—that is, an old male, which had been expelled from the herd. Such outcasts are usually very fierce and dangerous. This one was a tusker, who had been the terror of the neighbourhood, having killed many people, among them a forester, only a few days before our arrival.

“As these ‘rogues’ are always very difficult to overcome, and are almost sure to injure the khedda, or tame elephants of the hunt, if an attempt is made to capture them, we resolved to avoid him, and devote our attention entirely to the females and young ones. We formed a curious procession as we entered the valley—rajah and civilians, military men and mahowts, black and white, on pads and in howdahs—the last being the little towers that you see on elephants’ backs in pictures.

“Gun-men had been sent up to the head of the valley to block the way in that direction. The sides were too steep for elephants to climb. Thus we had them, as it were, in a trap, and formed up the khedda in battle array. The catching, or non-combatant elephants, were drawn up in two lines, and the big, fighting elephants were kept in reserve, concealed by bushes. The sides of the valley were crowded with matchlock-men, ready to commence shouting and firing at a given signal, and drive the herd in the direction of the khedda.

“It was a beautiful forenoon when we commenced to move forward. All nature seemed to be waiting in silent expectation of the issue of our hunt, and not a sound was heard, the strictest silence having been enjoined upon all. Rich tropical vegetation hung in graceful lines and festoons from the cliffs on either side, but there was no sign of the gun-men concealed there. The sun was——”

“Oh ! bother the sun ! Come on wi’ the fight,” exclaimed the impatient Junkie.

“All in good time, my boy. The sun was blazing in my eyes, I was going to say, so, you see, I could not make out the distant view, and therefore, can’t describe it” (“Glad of it,” murmured the impertinent Junkie); “but I knew that the wild elephants were there, somewhere in the dense jungle. Suddenly a shot was heard at the head of the valley. We afterwards learned that it had been fired over the head of a big tusker elephant that stood under a tree not many yards from

the man who fired. Being young, like Junkie, and giddy, it dashed away down the valley, trumpeting wildly ; and you have no conception how active and agile these creatures can be, if you have seen only the slow, sluggish things that are in our Zoos at home ! So terrible was the sound of this elephant's approach, that the ranks of the khedda elephants were thrown into some confusion, and the mahowts had difficulty in preventing them from turning tail and running away. Our leader, therefore, ordered the gladiator, Chand Moorut, to the front. Indeed, Chand ordered himself to the front, for no sooner did he hear the challenge of the tusker, than he dashed forward alone to accept it, and his mahowt found it almost impossible to restrain him. Fortunately the jungle helped the mahowt by hiding the tusker from view.

“When the wild elephant caught sight of the line of the khedda, he went at it with a mighty rush, crashing through bush and brake, and overturning small trees like straws, until he got into the dry bed of a stream. There he stopped short, for the colossal Chand Moorut suddenly appeared and charged him. The wild tusker, however, showed the white feather. He could not, indeed, avoid the shock altogether, but, yielding to it, he managed to keep his legs, turned short round, and fled past his big foe. Chand Moorut had no chance with the agile fellow in a race. He was soon left far behind, while the tusker charged onward. The matchlock-men tried in vain to check him. As he approached the line, the khedda elephants fled in

all directions. Thrusting aside some, and overturning others that came in his way, he held on his course, amid the din of shouting and rattling of shots, and finally, got clear away!"

"Oh, *what* a pity!" exclaimed Junkie.

"But that did not matter much," continued Jackman; "for news was brought in that the herd we had been after were not in that valley at all, but in the next one, and had probably heard nothing of all the row we had been making; so we collected our forces, and went after them.

"Soon we got to the pass leading into the valley, and then, just beyond it, came quite suddenly on a band of somewhere about thirty wild elephants. They were taken quite by surprise, for they were feeding at the time on a level piece of ground of considerable extent. As it was impossible to surround them, away the whole khedda went helter-skelter after them. It was a tremendous sight. The herd had scattered in all directions, so that our khedda was also scattered. Each hunting elephant had two men on its back—one, the nooseman, sitting on its neck, with a strong, thick rope in his hands, on which was a running noose; the other, the driver, who stood erect on the animal's back, holding on by a loop with one hand, and in the other flourishing an instrument called the *mungri*, with sharp spikes in it, wherewith to whip the poor animal over the root of his tail; for of course an ordinary whip would have had no more effect than a peacock's feather on an elephant's hide!

“ I ordered my mahowt to keep near one of the noosemen, whom I knew to be expert in the use of the giant-lasso. His name was Ramjee. Both Ramjee and his driver were screaming and yelling at the pitch of their voices, and the latter was applying his mungri with tremendous energy. The elephant they were after was a small female. It is always necessary that the chasing elephant should be much heavier than the one chased, else evil results follow, as we soon found. Presently the khedda elephant was alongside. Ramjee lifted the great loop in both hands, and leaned over till he almost touched the wild animal. Frequently this noosing fails from various reasons. For one thing, the wild creatures are often very clever at evading the noose: sometimes they push it away with their trunks; occasionally they step right through it, and now and then get only half through it, so that it forms a sort of tow rope, and the other end of this rope being made fast to the neck of the tame elephant, the wild one drags it along violently, unless the tame one is much heavier than itself. This is exactly what happened to Ramjee. He dropped the noose beautifully over the creature's head, but before it could be hauled tight—which was accomplished by checking the tame animal—the active creature had got its forelegs through. The loop caught, however, on its hind quarters, and away it went, dragging the tame elephant after it, Ramjee shrieking wildly for help. Two of the other tame elephants, not yet engaged, were sent to his assistance. These easily threw two more nooses over the wild crea-

ture, and, after a good run, she was finally exhausted, secured with ropes, and driven back to camp, there to be subjected to coercive treatment until she should become tame.

“Meanwhile, other captures were being made in the field. I was just moving off, after seeing this female secured, when a tremendous shouting attracted me. It was a party chasing a fine young tusker. He was very cunning, and ran about, dodging hither and thither, taking advantage of every tree and bush and inequality, while the mahowts failed again and again to noose him. I made my mahowt drive our animal so as to turn him back. We had no appliances to capture, as I was there only to look on and admire. At last a good throw noosed him, but he slipped through, all except one hind leg. On this the noose luckily held, and in a few minutes we had him secure. Of course, in driving our prisoners to camp, the tame elephants were used to guide them, stir them up, push them on, and restrain or punish them, as the case might require. This was easy with the smaller females and young ones, but it was a very different matter with big males, especially with rogues, as we found out before the close of that day.

“We were getting pretty well used up towards the afternoon, and had sent ten full-grown elephants and three calves into camp, when we received news that the rogue which had been so long a terror to the district, was in the neighbouring valley. So we resolved to go for him. Of course there was no possibility of

noosing such a monster. The ordinary elephants could never have been brought to face him. Our only hope therefore lay in our gladiators; and our plan was to make them knock him down repeatedly, until, at length, he should be tired out.

“I need not waste time with details. It is sufficient to say that, after about an hour’s search, we came upon the rogue in a dense part of the jungle. He was, as I have said, unusually big, as well as fierce. But our hero, Chand Moorut, had never yet met his match, so we resolved to risk an encounter. There was the dry bed of a river which the rogue would have to cross when driven down the valley by the gun-men. Here our gladiator was placed, partially concealed and ready to meet the rogue when he should appear. Fifty yards back the other fighting elephants were placed in support, and behind these were drawn up the rest of the khedda in three lines. Then the spectators, many of whom were ladies, were placed on a ledge of rock about forty feet above the river-bed, which commanded a good view of the proposed field of battle.

“Up to this time perfect silence had been maintained in our ranks. My elephant was stationed near the centre of the line, from which point I could see Chand Moorut standing calmly near the river-bed, with what I could almost fancy was a twinkle in his eye, as though he suspected what was coming.

“Suddenly a single shot was heard from up the valley. As it came echoing towards us, it was mingled with the spattering fire, shouting and yelling of the

beaters, who began to advance. Chand Moorut became rigid and motionless, like a statue. He was evidently thinking! Another instant, and the rogue's shrill trumpet-note of defiance rang high above the din. Trembling and restive the ordinary khedda elephants showed every symptom of alarm; but the fighters stood still, with the exception of Chand, who, becoming inflated with the spirit of war, made a sudden dash up the valley, intent on accepting the challenge! Fifty yards were passed before his mahowt, with voice, limb, and prod managed to reduce the well-trained warrior to obedience. Solemnly, and with stately gait, he returned to his position, his great heart swelling, no doubt, with anticipation.

"Scarcely had he taken up his position when the bushes higher up were seen to move, and the huge black form of the rogue appeared upon the scene. Unlike the lively young elephant that had escaped us in the morning, this old rogue marched sedately and leisurely down the hill-side, apparently as much unconcerned about the uproar of shooting and shouting in his rear as if it had been but the buzzing of a few mosquitoes. I confess that doubts as to the issue of the combat arose in my mind when I first saw him, for he appeared to be nearly, if not quite, as big as Chand Moorut himself, and of course I knew that the hard and well-trained muscles of a wild elephant were sure to be more powerful than those of a tame one. I stupidly forgot, at the moment, that indomitable pluck counts for much in a trial of mere brute force.

“Ignorant of what was in store for him, with head erect, and an air of quiet contempt for all animate creation, the rogue walked into the dry bed of the river, and began to descend. Expectation was now on tiptoe, when to our disgust he turned sharp to the right, and all but walked in amongst the spectators on the ledge above, some of whom received him with a volley of rifle balls. As none of these touched a vital spot, they might as well have been rhubarb pills! They turned him aside, however, and, breaking through the left flank of the khedda, he took refuge in the thickest jungle he could find. The whole khedda followed in hot pursuit, crashing through overgrowth of canes, creepers, and trees, in the midst of confusion and rumpus utterly inconceivable, therefore beyond my powers of description! We had to look out sharply in this chase, for we were passing under branches at times. One of these caught my man Quin, and swept him clean off his pad. But he fell on his feet, unhurt, and was quickly picked up and re-seated.

“In a short time we came in sight of the rogue, who suddenly turned at bay and confronted us. The entire khedda came to a most inglorious halt, for our heavy fighters had been left behind in the race, and the others dared not face the foe. Seeing this, he suddenly dashed into the midst of us, and went straight for the elephant on which our director and his wife were seated! Fortunately, a big tree, chancing to come in the rogue’s way, interfered with his progress. He devoted his energies to it for a few

moments. Then he took to charging furiously at everything that came in his way, and was enjoying himself with this little game when Chand Moorut once more appeared on the scene! The rogue stopped short instantly. It was evident that he recognised 'a foeman worthy of his steel' approaching. Chand Moorut advanced with alacrity. The rogue eyed him with a sinister expression. There was no hesitation on either side. Both warriors were self-confident; nevertheless, they did not rush to the battle. Like equally-matched veterans they advanced with grim purpose and wary deliberation. With heads erect, and curled trunks, they met, more like wrestlers than swordsmen, each seeming to watch for a deadly grip. Suddenly they locked their trunks together, and began to sway to and fro with awful evidence of power, each straining his huge muscles to the uttermost—the conflict of Leviathan and Behemoth!

“For only a few minutes did the result seem doubtful to the hundreds of spectators, who, on elephant-back or hill-side, gazed with glaring eyes and bated breath, and in profound silence. The slightly superior bulk and weight of our gladiator soon began to tell. The rogue gave way, slightly. Chand Moorut, with the skill of the trained warrior or the practised pugilist, took instant advantage of the move. With the rush of a thunderbolt he struck the rogue with his head on the shoulder. The effect was terrific. It caused him to turn a complete somersault into the jungle, where he fell with a thud and a crash that could be heard

far and near, and there he lay sprawling for a few moments, nothing but struggling legs, trunk, and tail being visible above the long grass!"

"Hooray!" shouted Junkie, unable to restrain himself.

"Just what my man Quin said," continued Jackman. "Only he added, 'Musha!' 'Thunder-an'-turf,' and 'Well, I niver!' And well he might, too, for none of us ever saw such a sight before. But the victory was not quite gained yet, for the rogue sprang up with amazing agility, and, refusing again to face such a terrible foe, he ran away, pursued hotly and clamorously by the whole khedda. I made my mahowt keep as close to Chand Moorut as possible, wishing to be in at the death. Suddenly a louder uproar in advance, and a shrill trumpeting assured me that the rogue had again been brought to bay.

"Although somewhat exhausted and shaken by his flight and the tremendous knock down, he fought viciously, and kept all his smaller foes at a respectful distance by repeated charges, until Chand Moorut again came up and laid him flat with another irresistible charge. He staggered to his feet again, however, and now the other fighting elephants, Raj Mungul, Isri Pershad, and others, were brought into action. These attacked the rogue furiously, knocking him down when he attempted to rise, and belabouring him with their trunks until he was thoroughly exhausted. Then one of the khedda men crept up behind him on foot, with thick ropes fitted for the purpose of tying him,

and fixed them on the rogue's hind legs. But the brave man paid heavily for his daring. He was still engaged with the ropes when the animal suddenly kicked out and broke the poor fellow's thigh. He was quickly lifted up and taken to camp.

“Not so quickly, however, was the rogue taken to camp! As it was growing dark, some of us resolved to bivouac where the capture had been made, and tied our captive to a tree. Next morning we let him go with only a hind leg hobbled, so that he might find breakfast for himself. Then, having disposed of our own breakfast, we proceeded to induce our prisoner to go along with us—a dangerous and difficult operation. As long as he believed that he might go where he pleased, we could induce him to take a few steps forward, but the moment he understood what we were driving at, he took the sulks, like an enormous spoilt child, and refused to move. The koonkies were therefore brought up, and Raj Mungul, going behind, gave him a shove that was irresistible. He lost temper and turned furiously on Raj, but received such an awful whack on the exposed flank from Isri Pershad, that he felt his case to be hopeless, and sulked again. Going down on his knees he stuck his tusks into the ground, like a sheet anchor, with a determination that expressed, ‘Move me out o’ this if you can!’

“Chand Moorut accepted the unspoken challenge. He gave the rogue a shove that not only raised his hind legs in the air, but caused him to stand on his head, and finally hurled him on his back. As he rose,

doggedly, he received several admonitory punches, and advanced a few paces. Spearmen also were brought forward to prick him on, but they only induced him to curl his trunk round a friendly tree that came in his way, and hold on. Neither bumping, pricking, nor walloping had now any effect. He seemed to have anchored himself there for the remainder of his natural life by an unnatural attachment.

“In this extremity the khedda men had recourse to their last resource. They placed under him some native fireworks, specially prepared for such emergencies, and, as it were, blew him up moderately. Being thus surprised into letting go his hold of the tree, he was urged slowly forward as before. You see, we did not want to kill the beast, though he richly deserved death, having killed so many natives, besides keeping a whole neighbourhood in alarm for years. We were anxious to take him to camp, and we managed it at last, though the difficulty was almost superhuman, and may to some extent be conceived when I tell you that, although we spent the whole of that day, from dawn to sunset, struggling with our obstinate captive, and with the entire force of the khedda, we only advanced to the extent of four or five hundred yards!”

Now, while this amazing story was being told by Giles Jackman to his friends in Barret's room, a very different story was being told in the room above them. That room was the nursery, and its only occupants were little Flo and her black doll. The rain had cleared off towards the afternoon, and a gleam of

sunshine entering the nursery windows, had formed a spot of intense light on the nursery floor. This seemed to have suggested something of great interest to Flo, for, after gazing at it with bright eyes for some time, she suddenly held the doll before her and said,—

“Blackie, I’m goin’ to tell you a stowy—a bustingly intewestin’ stowy.”

We must remind the reader here that Flo was naturally simple and sweet, and that as Junkie was her chief playmate, she was scarcely responsible for her language.

“The stowy,” continued Flo, “is all ’bout Doan of Ak, who was bu’nt by some naughty men, long, long ago! D’ you hear, Blackie? It would make your hair stand on end—if you had any!”

Thereupon the little one set Blackie on a stool, propped her against the wall, and gave her a fairly correct account of the death of the unfortunate Joan of Arc, as related by Mrs. Gordon that morning. She wound up with the question,—

“Now, what you think of *zat*, Blackie?”

As Blackie would not answer, Flo had to draw on her own bank of imagination for further supplies of thought.

“Come,” she cried, suddenly, with the eagerness of one whose cheque has just been honoured; “let’s play at Doan of Ak! You will be Doan, and I will be the naughty men. I’ll bu’n you! You mustn’t squeal, or kick up a wumpus, you know, but be dood.”

Having made this stipulation, our little heroine placed the black martyr on an old-fashioned straw-

bottomed chair near the window, and getting hold of a quantity of paper and some old cotton dresses, she piled the whole round Blackie to represent faggots. This done, she stepped back and surveyed her work as an artist might study a picture.

“You’ve dot your best muslin f’ock on, da’ling, an’ it’ll be spoiled; but I don’t care for zat. Now, say your pays, Doan.”

With this admonitory remark, Flo screwed up a piece of paper, went to the fireplace, made a very long arm through the fender, and lighted it. Next moment she applied the flame to the faggots, which blazed up with surprising rapidity.

Stepping quickly back, the dear little child gazed at her work with intense delight beaming from every feature.

“Now be dood, Blackie. Don’t make a wumpus!” she said; and as she said it, the flames caught the window curtains and went up with a flare that caused Flo to shout with mingled delight and alarm.

“I wonder,” remarked Mrs. Gordon, who chanced to be in the drawing-room on the windward side of the nursery, “what amuses Flo so much!”

She arose and went, leisurely, to see.

Roderick, the groom, being in the harness-room on the lee side of the nursery at the time, made a remark with the same opening words.

“I wonder,” said he, “what *that* wull pe!” A sniffing action of the nose told what “that” meant. “Don’t you smell a smell, Tonal?”

Donald sniffed, and replied that he did—"what-ē-ver."

"It wull pe somethin' on fire, Tonal'," said the groom, dropping the harness-brush and running out to the yard.

Donald being of the same opinion, followed him. At the same moment a piercing shriek was heard to issue from the house and wild confusion followed.

"Fire! fire!" yelled a voice in the yard outside, with that intensity of meaning which is born of thorough conviction.

Who that has never been roused by "fire!" can imagine the sensations that the cry evokes, and who that really has experienced those sensations can hope to explain them to the inexperienced? We cannot. We will not try.

But let us not plunge with undue haste into a fire!

It will be remembered that we left Jackman in Barret's room, having just ended his elephant story, to the satisfaction of his friends, while Mrs. Gordon was on her way to the nursery, bent on investigation. Well, the voice that shrieked in the nursery was that of Mrs. Gordon, and that which yelled in the yard was the voice of the groom, supplemented by Donald's treble.

Of course the gentlemen sprang to their feet, on hearing the uproar, dashed from the room in a body, and made straight for the nursery. On the way they met Mrs. Gordon with Flo in her arms—all safe; not a hair of her pretty little head singed, but looking

rather appalled by the consequences of what she had done.

“Safe! thank God!” exclaimed the laird, turning and descending with his wife and child, with some vague thoughts that he might be likely to find Mrs. Moss in her favourite place of resort, the library.

He was right. He found her there in a dead faint on the floor. He also found his three boys there, exerting themselves desperately to haul her out of the room by a foot and an arm and the skirt of her dress.

“We knew she was here, daddy,” gasped Eddie, “and came straight to help her.”

“Out o’ the way!” cried the laird as he grasped Mrs. Moss in his arms and bore her away. “Mother and Flo are safe, boys. Look out for yourselves.”

“I’ll go for the photographs! Come, help me, Ted,” cried Archie, as he ran up the now smoking stairs.

“I’ll go for Milly!” cried the heroic Junkie, as, with flashing eyes, he dashed towards her room.

But Barret had gone for Milly before him! and without success. She was not in her room. “Milly! Milly!” he shouted, in tones of undisguised anxiety, as he burst out of the nursery, after finding, with his companions, that no one was there and that suffocation was imminent. Then, as no Milly replied, he rushed up to the garret in the belief that she might have taken refuge there or on the roof in her terror.

Just after he had rushed out of the nursery, Junkie burst in. The boy was in his element now. We do not mean that he was a salamander and revelled in

fire and smoke, but he had read of fires and heard of them till his own little soul was ablaze with a desire to save some one from a fire—any one—somehow, or anyhow! Finding, like the rest, that he could scarcely breathe, he made but one swift circuit of the room. In doing so he tumbled on the chair on which the cause of all the mischief still sat smoking, but undeniably “dood”!

“Blackie!” he gasped, and seized hold of her denuded but still unconsumed wooden body.

A few moments later he sprang through the entrance door and tumbled out on the lawn, where most of the females of the establishment were standing.

“Saved!” he cried, in a voice of choking triumph, as he rose and held up the rescued and smoking doll.

“Doan! my da’ling Doan!” cried Flo, extending her arms eagerly to receive the martyr.

By that time the house was fairly alight in its upper storey, despite the utmost efforts of all the men to extinguish the fire with buckets of water.

“No use, no use to waste time trying,” said the laird, as he ran out among the females on the lawn. “Is everybody safe? eh? Milly—where’s Milly?”

“Milly! where’s Milly?” echoed a stentorian voice, as Barret bounded out of the smoking house with singed hair and blackened face.

“There—there she is!” cried several of the party, as they pointed towards the avenue leading to the house.

“BY THAT TIME THE HOUSE WAS FAIRLY ALIGHT.”



All eyes were eagerly turned in that direction, and a general exclamation of thankfulness escaped, as Milly was seen running towards the scene of action. She had been down seeing old Mrs. Donaldson, and knew nothing of what had occurred, till she came in sight of the conflagration





CHAPTER XVI.

TWO FIRES SUBDUED.

BARRET, half ashamed of the wild anxiety he had displayed, turned at once, sprang back into the burning house, and began to expend his energies in helping his companions and the men of the establishment to save as much as possible of the laird's property.

While this was being done and the attention of every one was directed exclusively to the work of salvage—in which work Pat Quin shone conspicuous for daring as well as for all but miraculous power to endure heat and swallow smoke, Roderick, the groom, retired to the lawn for a few moments' respite. He was accompanied by Donald, his faithful assistant, who was almost exhausted by his labours.

“Tonal’, poy, what iss it that Muster Archie wull pe doin’?”

“I think he wull pe takin’ the hoose!”

They had not time to make further inquiry, for just

then the wind changed and blew the flames towards the part of the mansion that had been already burned, giving some hope that the other parts might yet be saved, and calling for the redoubled efforts of all hands.

Donald was right in his conjecture. Archie was indeed "takin'" the house! He and Eddie—having succeeded in rescuing the photographic apparatus, and, finding that no lives were in danger, and that enough people were already endeavouring to save the property—had calmly devoted themselves to taking photographs of the blazing scene from several points of view—a feat that was still possible, as daylight had not yet been diminished in power.

The change of wind, however, brought their operations to an abrupt close, for no idlers were tolerated. Even the women were summoned to stand in a row and pass buckets from a neighbouring pond to the burning house.

The proceedings now had been reduced to some degree of order by Giles Jackman, whose experience abroad had tended to develop his powers of organisation.

The buckets were passed in uninterrupted succession from the pond to the house, where Mabberly received them at the front door, that being deemed the point where danger and the need for unusual energy began. He passed them in through the smoke of the hall to MacRummle, who handed them to Roderick and the butler. These last stood in the dense smoke of the

staircase, at the head of which the tall gamekeeper, Jackman and Barret, were engaged in close and deadly conflict with the flames, intense heat, falling *débris*, and partial suffocation. The rest of the people, headed by the laird, who seemed to have renewed his youth and become ubiquitous, continued the work of salvage.

By that time the party of warriors who fought the flames was increased by the shepherds and a few small farmers who dwelt in the neighbourhood. These being stalwart and willing men, were a valuable accession to the force, and did good service not only in saving property, but in extinguishing the fire. So that, before night closed in, the flames were finally subdued after about one-half of the mansion had been consumed.

That half, however, was still a source of great danger, the walls being intensely hot and the fallen beams a mass of glowing charcoal, which the least breath of wind blew into a flame. A few of the shepherds were therefore stationed to watch these, and pour water on them continually. But the need for urgent haste was past, and most of the people had assembled on the lawn among the furniture when the stars began to glimmer in the darkening sky.

“My dear,” said the laird, on finding his wife in the group, “it is all safe now, so you had better get off to rest, and take all the women with ye. Come, girls, be off to your beds,” he added, turning with kindly smile to the domestics, and with the energetic manner that was habitual to him. “You’ve done good service, and stand much in need of rest, all of you. The men will

keep a sharp look-out on what's left o' the fire, so you have nothing to fear. Off with you, an' get to sleep!"

There was no hesitation in obeying the laird's commands. The female domestics went off at once to their dormitories, and these were fortunately in that part of the mansion which had escaped. Some of the younger girls, however, made no effort to conceal a giggle as they glanced at their master who, with coat off, shirt torn, face blackened, hair dishevelled, and person dripping, presented rather an undignified appearance. But as worthy Allen Gordon had never set up a claim to dignity, the giggles only amused him.

"Duncan! Duncan, man, where are ye?" he called out, when the ladies and female domestics had gone. "Oh! there ye are—an' not much more respectable than myself!" he added, as the butler answered to his summons. "Go and fetch the whisky bottle. We'll all be the better of a dram after such a fight. What say you, gentlemen? Do you not relax your teetotal principles a little on an occasion like this?"

"We never relax our *total abstinence* principles," returned Jackman, with a smile, as he wrung some of the water out of his garments. "I think I may speak for my companions as well as myself. Friendship has been a sufficient stimulant while we were engaged in the work, and gratitude for success will suffice now that the work is done."

"Run, Donald, boy, an' tell them to get some hot coffee ready at once! It's all very well, gentlemen."

said the laird, turning again to his friends, "to talk of subsisting on friendship and gratitude; but although very good in their way, they won't do for present necessities. At least it would ill become me to express my gratitude to such good friends without offering something more. For myself," he added, filling and tossing off a glass of whisky, "I'm an old man, and not used to this kind of work, so I'll be the better of a dram. Besides, the Gordons—my branch of them, at least—have always taken kindly to mountain dew, in moderation, of course, in strict moderation!"

There was a quiet laugh at this among some of the men who stood near, for it was well known that not a few of the laird's ancestors had taken kindly to mountain dew without the hampering influence of moderation, though the good man himself had never been known to "exceed"—in the Celtic acceptation of that term.

"Are ye laughing, you rascals?" he cried, turning to the group with a beaming, though blackened countenance. "Come here an' have your share—as a penalty!"

Nothing loath, the men came forward, and with a quiet word of thanks each poured the undiluted fiery liquid down his throat, with what the boy Donald styled a "pech" of satisfaction.

Ivor Donaldson chanced to be one of the group, but he did not come forward with the rest.

"Come, Ivor, man, and have a dram," said the laird, pouring out a glass.

But the keeper did not move. He stood with his arms crossed firmly on his broad chest, and a stern dogged expression on his handsome face.

“Ivor, hi!” exclaimed the old gentleman, in a louder voice, supposing that the man had not heard. “After work like this a dram will do you good.”

“Oo, ay!” remarked one of the shepherds, who had probably began to feel the “good” by that time; “a tram of whusky iss a fery coot thing at *all* times—specially when it is *coot* whusky!”

At this profound witticism there was a general laugh among the men, in the midst of which the laird repeated his invitation to Ivor, saying that he seemed knocked up after his exertions (which was partially true), and adding that surely he was man enough to take a little for his good at such a time, without giving way to it.

The laird did not mean this as a taunt, but it was taken as such by the keeper, who came forward quickly, seized the glass, and drained it. Having done so he stood for a moment like one awaking from a dream. Then, without a word of thanks, he dropped the glass, sprang into the shrubbery, and disappeared.

The laird was surprised, and his conscience smote him, but he turned the incident off with a laugh.

“Now, lads,” he said, “go to work again. It will take all your energies to keep the fire down, if it comes on to blow; and your comrades must be tired by this time.”

Fortunately it did not come on to blow. The night

was profoundly calm, so that a steady though small supply of water sufficed to quench incipient flames.

Meanwhile Giles Jackman had left the group on the lawn almost at the same moment with the game-keeper; for, having been accustomed to deal with men in similar circumstances, he had a suspicion of what might follow. The poor man, having broken the resolve so recently and so seriously formed, had probably, he thought, become desperate.

Ivor was too active for him, however. He disappeared before Jackman had followed more than a few yards. After a few moments of uncertainty, the latter made straight for old Molly Donaldson's cottage, thinking it possible that her unhappy son might go there. On the way he had to pass the keeper's own cottage, and was surprised to see a light in it and the door wide open. As he approached, the sound of the keeper's voice was heard speaking violently, mingled with blows, as if delivered with some heavy instrument against timber. A loud crash of breaking wood met Jackman's ear as he sprang in. Ivor was in the act of rending the remains of a door from a corner cupboard, while an axe, which he had just dropped, lay at his feet on the earthen floor. A black quart bottle, visible through the opening which had been made, showed the reason of his assault on the cupboard. If there had been any uncertainty on the point, it would have been dispelled by the wild laugh or yell of fierce exultation with which he seized the bottle, drew the cork, and raised it to his dry lips.

Before it reached them, however, Jackman's strong hand seized the keeper's arm. A gasp from the roused giant, and the deadly pallor of his countenance, as he glanced round, showed that superstition had suddenly seized on his troubled soul ; but no sooner did he see who it was that had checked him, than the hot blood rebounded to his face, and a fierce glare shot from his eyes.

"Thank God!—not too late!" exclaimed Jackman, fervently.

The thanksgiving was addressed to God, of course without reference to its influence on Ivor; but no words, apparently, could have been used with better effect upon the keeper's spirit. His eyes lost their ferocity, and he stood irresolute.

"Break it, like a good fellow," said Jackman, in a soft, kindly voice, as he pointed to the bottle.

"I broke one before, sir," said Ivor, in a despairing tone ; "and you see how useless that was."

"Give it to me, then."

As he spoke, he took the bottle from the man's grasp, and cast it through the open doorway, where it was shivered to atoms on the stones outside.

Striding towards a pitcher of water which stood in a corner of the room, the keeper seized it, put it to his lips, and almost drained it.

"There!" he exclaimed ; "that will drown the devil for a time!"

"No, Ivor, it won't ; but it will *help* to drown it," said Jackman, in the same kindly, almost cheerful

voice. "Neither cold water nor hottest fire can slay the evils that are around and within us. There is only one Saviour from sin—Jesus, 'who died for the sins of the whole world.' He makes use of means, however, and these means help towards the great end. But it was not the Saviour who told you to lock that bottle in that cupboard—was it?"

An expression of perplexity came over the keeper's face.

"You are right, sir; it was not. But, to my thinkin' it was not the devil either!"

"Very likely not. I think sometimes we are inclined to put many things on the devil's shoulders which ought to rest on our own. You know what the Bible says about the deceitfulness of our hearts."

"I do, sir, an' yet I don't quite see that it was that either. I did not put that bottle there to have it handy when I wanted it. I put it there when I made up my mind to fight this battle in Christ's name, so as I might see if He gave me strength to resist the temptation, when it was always before me."

"Just so, Ivor, my friend. That 'if' shows that you doubted Him! Moreover, He has put into our mouths that prayer, 'lead us not into temptation,' and you proposed to keep temptation always before your eyes."

"No, sir, no, not quite so bad as that," cried the keeper, growing excited. "I shut the door an' locked the accursed thing out of my sight, and when I found

I could *not* resist the temptation, I took the key out and flung it into the sea."

"Would it not have been better to have flung the evil thing itself into the sea? You soon found another key!" said his friend, pointing to the axe.

"You say truth, sir; but oh, you hev no notion o' the fight I hev had wi' that drink. The days an' nights of torment! The horrors! Ay, if men could only taste the horrors *before* they tasted the drink, I do believe there would be no drunkards at all! I hev lain on that bed, sir," he pointed to it as he spoke, while large drops stood on his pale brow at the very recollection, "and I hev seen devils and toads and serpents crawlin' round me and over me—great spiders, and hairy shapeless things, wi' slimy legs goin' over my face, and into my mouth, though I gnashed my teeth together—and glaring into my tight shut eyes, an' strangling me. Oh! sir, I know not what hell may be, but I think that it begins on earth wi' some men!"

"From all this Jesus came to save us, Ivor," said Jackman, endeavouring to turn the poor man's mind from the terrible thoughts that seemed about to overwhelm him; "but God will have us to consent to be saved in *His own* way. When you put the temptation in the cupboard, you disobeyed Him, and therefore were trying to be saved in *your own* way. Disobedience and salvation cannot go together, because salvation means deliverance from disobedience. You and I will pray, Ivor, that God would give us His Holy

Spirit, and then we shall fight our battles in future with more success."

Thereupon, standing as they were, but with bowed spirits and heads, they laid the matter in the hands of God in a brief but earnest prayer.

While these two were thus engaged, the scene at the house had entered upon another phase. The weather, which all that day had been extremely changeable, suddenly assumed its gloomiest aspect, and rain began to fall heavily. Gradually the fall increased in volume, and at last descended in an absolute deluge, rendering the use of water-buckets quite unnecessary, and accomplishing in a very few minutes what all the men at the place could not have done in as many hours. But that which prevented effectually the extension of the fire, caused, almost as effectually, the destruction of much of the property exposed on the lawn. The men were therefore set to work with all their energies to replace in the unburnt part of the mansion all that they had so recently carried out of it.

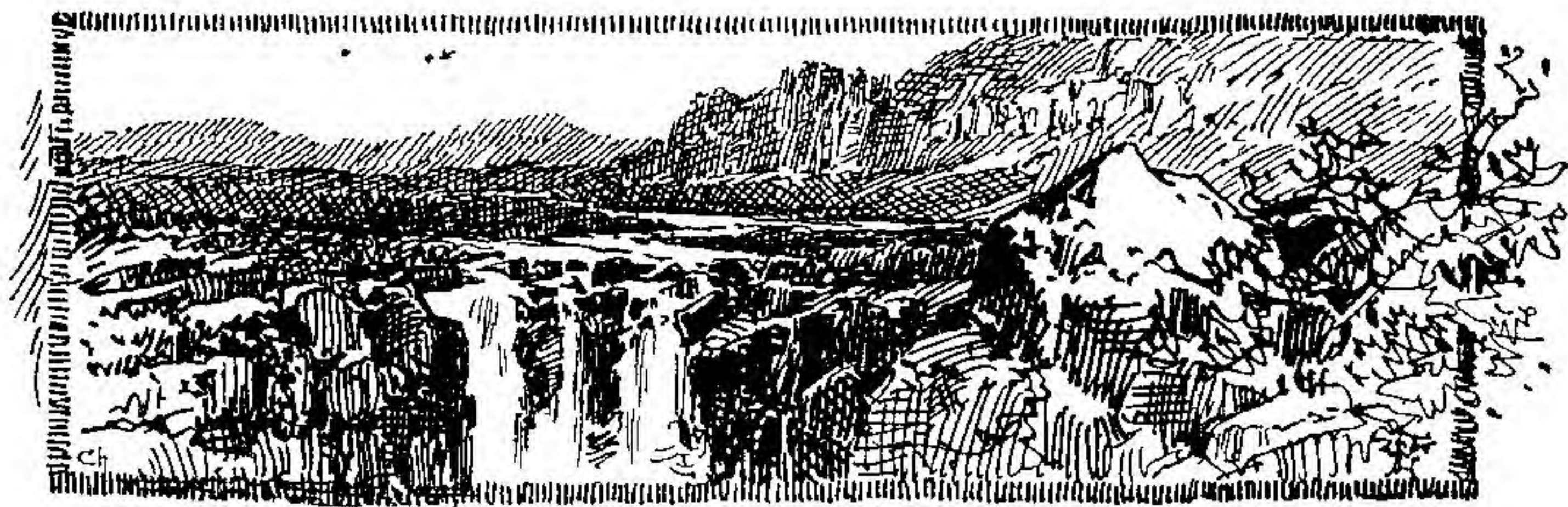
In this work Ivor Donaldson found a sufficient outlet for the fierce unnatural energies which had been aroused within him. He went about heaving and hauling, and staggering under weights that in an ordinary state of body and mind he could scarcely have moved. Little notice was taken of him, however, for every one else was, if not doing the same thing, at least working up to the utmost extent of his ability.

Before midnight all was over. The fire was what the cook termed black out. The furniture, more than

half destroyed, was re-housed. The danger of a revival of the flames was past, and the warriors in the great battle felt themselves free to put off their armour and seek refreshment.

This they did—the males at least—in the gun-room, which, being farthest from the fire, and, therefore, left untouched, had not been damaged either by fire or water. Here the thoughtful laird had given orders to have a cold collation spread, and here, with his guests, men-servants, boys, and neighbouring farmers around him, he sat down to supper.





CHAPTER XVII.

CONCLUSION.

“**W**E are a queer lot, what-ē-ver!” remarked one of the farmers, with a deep sigh and a candid smile, as he looked round the company.

The observation was incontrovertible, if charcoaled faces, lank hair, torn and dripping garments, and a general appearance of drowned-ratiness may be regarded as “queer.”

“My friends,” said the laird, digging the carving fork into a cold turkey, “we are also a hungry lot, if I may judge of others by myself, so let me advise you to fall to. We can’t afford to sit long over our supper in present circumstances. Help yourselves, and make the most of your opportunities.”

“Thank God,” said Giles Jackman, “that we have the opportunity to sit down to sup under a roof at all.”

“Amen to that,” returned the laird; “and thanks to you all, my friends, for the help you have rendered.

But for you, this house and all in it would have been burnt to ashes. I never before felt so strongly how true it is that we 'know not what a day may bring forth.' ”

“What you say, sir, is fery true,” remarked a neighbouring small farmer, who had a sycophantish tendency to echo or approve whatever fell from the laird’s lips.

“It is indeed true,” returned his host, wiping the charcoal from his face with a moist handkerchief; “but it is the Word that says it, not I. And is it not strange,” he added, turning with a humorous look to Barret, “that after all these years the influence of Joan of Arc should be still so powerful in the Western Isles? To think that she should set my house on fire in this nineteenth century!”

“I am very glad she did!” suddenly exclaimed Junkie, who, having been pretty well ignored or forgotten by everybody, was plying his knife and fork among the other heroes of the fight in a state of inexpressible felicity.

“You rascal!” exclaimed his father; “you should have been in bed long ago! But why are you so glad that Joan set the house on fire?”

“Because she gave me the chance to save Blackie’s life!” replied Junkie, with supreme contentment.

The company laughed, and continued their meal, but some of them recalled the proverb which states that “the boy is father to the man,” and secretly prophesied a heroic career for Junkie.



Ten months passed away, during which period Allen Gordon retired to his residence in Argyleshire while his mansion in the Western Island was being restored. During the same period Archie produced innumerable hazy photographs of Kinlossie House in a state of conflagration; Eddie painted several good copies of the bad painting into which Milly Moss had introduced a megatherium cow and other specimens of violent perspective; and Junkie underwent a few terrible paroxysms of intense hatred of learning in all its aspects, in which paroxysms he was much consoled by the approval and sympathy of dear little Flo.

During this period, also, Mabberly applied himself to his duties in London, unaffected by the loss of the *Fairy*, and profoundly interested in the success of his friend Barret, who had devoted himself heart and head to natural history, with a view to making that science his profession, though his having been left a competence by his father rendered a profession unnecessary, from a financial point of view. As for Giles Jackman, that stalwart "Woods-and-Forester" returned to his adopted land, accompanied by the faithful Quin, and busied himself in the activities of his adventurous career, while he sought to commend the religion of Jesus alike to native and European, both by precept and example, proving the great truth that "godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life which now is, and of that which is to come." MacRummle, during the same period, spent much time in his study, writing for publication an elaborate

treatise on fishing, with a few notes on shooting, in the Western Isles. He was encouraged in this work by a maiden sister who worshipped him, and by the presence of an enormous stuffed eagle in a corner of his study.

One day, towards the close of this period of ten months, a beautiful little woman and a handsome young man might have been seen riding in one of the quiet streets of London. They rode neither on horseback, nor in a carriage, still less in a cab! Their vehicle was a tricycle of the form which has obtained the name of "Sociable."

"See, this is the corner, Milly," said the young man. "I told you that one of the very first places I would take you to see after our marriage would be the spot where I had the good fortune to run *our* mother down. So now I have kept my word. There is the very spot, by the lamp-post, where the sweep stood looking at the thin little old lady so pathetically when I was forced to rise and run away."

"Oh, John!" exclaimed Milly, pointing with eager looks along the street; "and there is the thin little old lady herself!"

"So it is! Well, coincidences will never cease," said Barret, as he stepped from the "sociable" and hurried to meet Mrs. Moss, who shook her finger and head at him as she pointed to the pavement near the lamp-post.

"I would read you a lecture now, sir," she said; "but will reserve it, for here is a letter that may interest you."

It did indeed interest all three of them, as they sat together that afternoon in the sunshine of Milly's boudoir, for it was a long and well-written epistle from old Molly Donaldson.

We will not venture to weary the reader with all that the good old woman had to say, but it may perhaps be of interest to transcribe the concluding sentence. It ran thus,—

“You will be glad to hear that my dear Ivor is doing well. He was married in March to Aggy Anderson, an’ they live in the old cottage beside me. Ivor has put on the blue ribbon. The laird has put it on too, to the surprise o’ everybody. But I think little o’ that. I think more o’ a bit pasteboard that hangs over my son’s mantelpiece, on which he has written wi’ his own hand the blessed words—‘*Saved by Grace.*’”

THE END.

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